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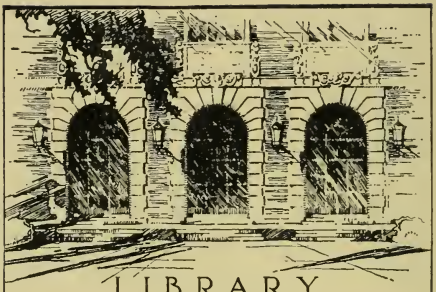

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THE

FRIAR HILDARGO.

A LEGENDARY TALE.

IN FIVE VOLUMES.

BY

EDWARD MORTIMER, ESQ.

VOLUME IV.

LONDON:

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Friar Hildargo.

A TALE

OF

THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

WHEN the sable knight and his companion had arrived near the castle of Manstow, they left their horses at the cottage of a peasant, and proceeded towards the castle; the knight then dispatched his shield-bearer with a challenge to Sir Orlando de Vortimer, to meet him the next morning in combat; for the sable knight,

who, as has been said, was no other than Edmund de St. Clair, learnt from his attendant, the faithful Mortimer de Veseri, that the robber whom he had carried to the cottage, was one of the men who brought the news of the murder of the Lady Agnes to the chateau de St. Clair.

On hearing this, he immediately entered the hut and demanded the particulars of the man, who, with some hesitation, at length confessed to Edmund, that the Lady Agnes had not been murdered by the banditti, but that he had left her in company with the monk Hildargo, who, he understood, was going to take her to some place of confinement. At this information he immediately formed the plan of demanding in the field, from Sir Orlando, what had been done with his beloved mother.

When De Vortimer received the challenge, he whispered to De Burleigh, to take a party of men, and follow the he-

rald, and endeavour to take him and the sable knight prisoners, for he knew he would readily undertake the base act he had charged him with, as he himself had been disgraced in the field by the sable knight; and therefore longed to revenge himself on his unknown opponent; for Sir Orlando little conceived that the Edmund he had long since thought dead, was the Knight of the the Black Cloud, who sought a just revenge for the injuries his mother had received.

De Burleigh, with his men, instantly departed, and in the darkness of the evening, contrived to follow the herald without being perceived, and when he met the knight by the side of the lake, watching a convenient opportunity, sprang on them, and soon overpowered them with their superior numbers.

The sable knight was not taken without making the most desperate resistance; and when at length he found his

efforts vain, and that De Mortimer had succeeded but too well in his base schemes, he disdained to speak, and was conveyed to the castle, with his faithful attendant, who followed his master's example.

The party carried no torches with them; and it was completely dark as they passed under the lowering barbacan; they then turned to the right, and entered a hall, where he, who seemed to command the party, ordered a torch to be brought; and Edmund, when the light glared on him, discovered him to be the knight he had vanquished in the tournament, and to whom he had so generously comported himself.

He could scarcely keep from rebuking him for his treachery, but regarding him as the instrument of Sir Orlando's baseness, he turned from him with a look of silent contempt, and proceeded with the party through a vaulted passage, which led into a large chapel; pass-

ing down the grand aisle, one of the men opened a folding portal, which disclosed a flight of steps, the bottom of which Edmund found was a cemetery; continuing to traverse a long while through the heaps of mortality, they came to an extensive chamber, and on one side the conductors opened a dungeon, and thrust the faithful Mortimer into the gloomy void.

They then proceeded to a door which disclosed a small passage, at the end of this they endeavoured to open a portal, but found that it was fastened; much surprised at this circumstance, they debated whether they should not force it; but one of the party informed the leader that there was a chamber above that, which would suit their purpose.

The flight of steps which led to it being discovered, they hastened to it, and loosing the chains, and drawing back the bolts, the unfortunate Edmund was conducted into a chamber, and there

left without a light to cheer the solitary hours, or shew the gloomy dungeon which his hard fate had consigned him to.

Edmund, as the last glare of the torches flashed on the walls of the apartment, saw a door which was left open at the further end, and to which he repaired, but not being able to perceive whither it led, he waited anxiously for the dawn of day, that he might explore the passage.

He then paced his chamber in an agony of mind not be conceived; to behold himself in the power of Sir Orlando, who had so basely treated his beloved parent, and who would doubtless destroy him, that he might not only claim his estates, but also rid himself of an enemy who was on the eve of requiring from him an account of his base treatment to his mother.

The thought, that she too, if she still existed, would be without a friend to assert her rights, distressed him more

than the idea of the thread of his hapless existence being cut asunder by the ruthless Orlando.

While indulging these sad ruminations, he thought he heard a noise below, and which seemed as if it proceeded from that part of his chamber where the door was; he advanced to it, and listening attentively, plainly heard the shrieks of some one in distress; feeling his way, he cautiously descended the steps; the cries became every moment more distinct; he distinguished the voice of a female supplicating for mercy; and beheld a light through the chinks of a door, that now stopped his progress; furiously he burst it open, and entering the chamber, beheld a lady struggling in the arms of a monk, whom he instantly recognized to be Hildargo.

At the sight of this detested agent of De Vortimer, and of his infernal intent, he burned with rage, and seizing him in his strong grasp, hurled him far from

the lady, who sunk, fainting with the terror and agitation she had undergone, on the couch. He surveyed the hapless intended victim for a moment; and then his attention was directed towards the monk, who was stealing out of the apartment.

Darting forwards, he again seized and dashed him against the rough wall. Advancing towards the lady, his beloved mother appeared to his view—with whom, as has been related, after he had released his faithful Mortimer he left the castle.

De Burleigh instantly returned to the hall after he had seen Edmund secured in the dungeon, and related his success to Sir Orlando, who, now freed from his fears respecting the sable knight, whom he conceived to be the champion of the Lady Anna, enjoyed the exhilarating draught with his gay companions, to a late hour, revolving at times in his mind what he should do

with the unknown knight now he had him so completely in his power. He looked round the table for his trusty agent Hildargo, but found that he had left the hall. The feast was prolonged to a late hour, and when at length his friends had retired, he rejoiced with De Burleigh on the success of their plans.

He was so anxious to know who the sable knight was, that he proposed going directly to his dungeon with De Burleigh, and satisfy his curiosity, but in this he was restrained by De Burleigh, who advised him to wait till the morning, and with Hildargo and himself, to determine on what was best to be done.

Orlando agreed to this, and early next morning, he proceeded to the monk's apartment, but found to his astonishment, that he had not laid down, or apparently been in his room that night: much surprised at this circumstance, he went to De Burleigh, whom

he found just rising, and acquainted him with it; they then enquired of the domestics, who all declared they had not seen the confessor since he left the hall the preceding evening.

De Vortimer now left De Burleigh, and proceeded to the dungeon of the Lady Agnes, where he knew it was the monk's intention to have gone the night before; greatly astonished he found the door open, and entering, beheld Hildargo stretched upon the floor, seemingly dead; the door that communicated with the room above, met his view, and hastily ascending the steps, he found the dungeon where the sable knight had been confined, empty.

A horrible fear overwhelmed him, he left the dungeons, and reaching the hall, sent for De Burleigh, to whom he imparted the flight of their intended victim, and the situation of Hildargo; taking some of the domestics, they proceeded towards the dungeons, greatly

alarmed lest they should behold the sable knight starting forth from the covert of some column or tomb, and punish them for their baseness.

When they came to the body of the monk, they felt his side to know if he yet lived, a faint pulsation indicated that life still feebly lingered in his veins, and lifting him from the blood-stained floor, they bore him to his chamber, and laid him on his couch.

For a long time he continued insensible, a large wound which he had in his head, and several bruises on his body shewed that it must have been the knight who had thus treated him, when, as it was likely he resisted his attempts to liberate the Lady Agnes.

Thus thought De Vortimer, for it was unknown to any one but himself and the monk that the Lady Agnes was a prisoner in the dungeons of Manstow. Fear shook the soul of Sir Orlando, his persecuted wife had escaped.

and soon his base deeds would be known to the world; a thousand times he cursed his folly that he had not rendered himself secure by her destruction, now it was too late. "Yet" thought he, "they possibly may be somewhere concealed in some of the vaults. With this idea he hastily rushed out of the chamber, and commanding a party of his people to arm themselves, went directly into the cemetery.

The castle of Manstow was an ancient edifice, and the repository for the dead stretched out to an extent beyond the walls. Here the ancient inhabitants of the castle held their last abode. Here slept the beauteous maid, the anxious mother, and the valiant knight: here many a persecuted being lay, and here the remains of the revengeful disturbers of their quiet, when alive, now alike silent. Though not alike their disembodied spirits, one at length enjoying happiness in the blissful abodes of the

good, and the other tormented by the foul demons of darkness.

Through these regions of night and silence Sir Orlando and his party pursued their way, walking over the uneven ground which covered many a mouldering form, and echoed back their steps.

Having with much difficulty explored the whole of these dismal recesses, Sir Orlando returned fatigued and miserable, and when he was in the chapel, seeing the doors of the passage that led to the armoury, open, it struck him that his intended victims must have made their escape that way; and on examining the passage, found that his conjectures were right. He now slowly turned back to the chamber of the monk to see if he had revived, and if from him he could learn the extraordinary transactions of the night.

The attendants had dressed the wounds of the monk, and by pouring some

cordials into his mouth, he began slowly to exhibit signs of returning life; at length he opened his languid eyes, he looked around him, then closed them with great agitation.

De Vortimer now entered, and stood silently with folded arms by the couch, watching the ghastly countenance of Hildargo, who now groaned with the pain occasioned by his wounds. Sir Orlando dismissed every one from the chamber, and awaited the returning senses of the monk, who soon after gazed on him. "How came you, father, in this situation?" demanded Sir Orlando, in a low voice. "The Lady Agnes has escaped as well as the sable knight."

"'Tis true," replied Hildargo, in a voice scarcely intelligible; "the knight attacked me in the apartment of the Lady Agnes;—how he came there, I know not."

"I have just now discovered, father,"

said De Vortimer, "a passage which communicates with both the chambers."

"Have you sent parties after them?" demanded the monk. "No," said De Vortimer.

"Why not?" said Hildargo, greatly agitated. "Do not you reflect how much depends on it? We are ruined for ever if they escape—all will be discovered; that accursed Pierro will be my ruin."

"What Pierro is it you allude to?" said De Vortimer, much surprised. "Where are the papers that were in the dungeon?" demanded the monk. "I did not observe any," said Sir Orlando. "Then they have got them, and I am ruined for ever!" said Hildargo.

Overcome with the agonizing sensations of his mind, he fell back on his pillow, the motion caused the blood to flow. Overwhelmed with the anguish both of his mind and body,

the monk grew delirious. "Where am I?" said he. "What furies are those which surround me!—Touch me not!—See they are dragging the flesh from my bones! Elmira, thou art dead, and so is Benoni—why then do you come here!—Did not I hear thy last voice, how horrible it sounded!"

Thus did he continue raving, while Orlando listened with horror to the distracted sentences he uttered. At length the voice of the monk grew fainter, and the loss of blood made him lay quite exhausted on his couch.

De Vortimer summoned the domestics to attend him, and then dispatched several parties after the sable knight and the Lady Agnes. In an agony of mind he paced the spacious hall, and revolved in his heart the probable consequences of the escape of his injured wife. He foresaw that he should greatly incur the displeasure of the king; and he began to

think that he had better leave the kingdom, and avoid the impending storm.

As this thought struck him, he was standing at one of the portals of the hall, and his eyes glanced over the lofty embattled walls. "No," said he; "at least these will defy an assault, and I may remain secure within them."

With this idea he sent for De Burleigh, and acquainted him with the probable consequences of the flight of the knight, who, he gave him to understand, was the champion of the Lady Anna, and for some unknown reasons his private enemy; and requested the assistance of his vassals in defending his castle should it be attacked.

De Burleigh consented to this, in consideration of a large remuneration for his services, and Orlando exulting in his fancied security, determined on a desperate resistance.

He now again thought of Hildargo,

and proceeded to his apartment. He had again recovered from the deathlike stupor into which he had fallen from the loss of blood; but his senses still wandered, and he uttered words of such import as made De Vortimer dismiss the attendants from the chamber, fearful lest he might disclose his proceedings towards the Lady Agnes to the domestics of the castle, and incur thereby their ill opinion; for the greater part of them believed in the base fabrications he had uttered respecting the Lady Anna; and while they condemned her supposed conduct with the sable knight, approved of Sir Orlando's treatment of her.

Hildargo was now raving of the Baron de St. Clair. "See," said he, "how he smiles at seeing my torments! Look, he is adding fuel to the flames which consume me! And there is Bardino too; see how he shews me the wound I gave him!—St. Clair, it was not me who

killed thee; it was Pierro! Drag me not thus to that dismal gulph!—Hark! what groan was that? Is he not dead yet? Give me the dagger. Marino, thou shalt not escape me!"

De Vortimer listened with horror to the unconnected sentences of the monk, which shewed how deeply he had imbrued his hands in blood. He saw too, that Hildargo had not long to live. A raging heat dwelt in his veins; his breath was short; a reddish hue overspread his cheeks; and his body trembled with the agitations of his perturbed conscience. He was now silent for a few moments; then again he raised himself up on his couch.

"Laura," he exclaimed, "thou art now revenged. See how the flames devour my body! Marino, Benoni, Elmira, see me—pity me! Oh, mercy! Demons, drag me not thus!—I sink! Oh, horror, horror! my soul is engulphed in raging flames!—Oh, torture,

agony insupportable!—Save me!—Oh, I sink for ever!"

Here with a dreadful groan of long continuance, the wretched Hildargo breathed his last; and he now lay a pale and ghastly corpse, extended on the couch. Shocked at the scene, De Vortimer hasted from the chamber, and summoned the domestics to attend the remains.

Thus fell Hildargo by the hand of him whom he had so greatly injured, and in the intended commission of the most horrible act at which nature recoils with horror; shewing, that though the sword of divine retribution may for a while be suspended, yet at last it falls with an unerring hand on the offender when he least expects, and is least prepared for it.

De Vortimer, shocked at the horrible end of the monk, retired to his apartments, involved in miserable reflections. De Burleigh, however, soon after en-

tered, and endeavoured to drive away the corroding thoughts that harassed his soul, by representing to him the necessity there was for him to attend to the defences of the castle, and to give orders for the reception of a body of his vassals who would be there the next morning.

These representations rouzed De Vortimer from the distressing thoughts which involved his mind, and accompanied by De Burleigh he went forth to view the castle, and to prepare for the reception of the mercenaries promised by De Burleigh.

Parties were now ordered out to provide provisions for the troops, who extorted it by force from the peasantry, who were unable to resist the cruel spoilers. The barbacan with its two round towers reared its threatening height above the great castle-gates, which were formed of oaken planks, strongly cased with iron, within was the

huge portcullis which was suspended by massy chains to the vaulted roof of the passage.

Besides the towers of the barbacan, on each side of the gate was a strong tower, which were secure places for the defenders to annoy the assaulters; and from the loop-holes which were made in the walls of the chambers they contained, to hurl darts and stones on all who should endeavour to approach the gates.

Round the whole of the castle were ramparts, strengthened at equal distances with square towers, on whose embattled tops were placed the archers who were to defend them.

De Vortimer and De Burleigh carefully examined every place. The western postern was carefully closed up, and every precaution was taken to render the place secure. The next morning the mercenaries, promised by De Burleigh, arrived; and Sir Orlando, in

the almost impregnable castle of Manstow, thought himself secure from the efforts of the forces which might be sent to compel him to submit to the punishment which the king might think proper to inflict on him.

Sir Orlando now sent to St. Austin's monastery, to acquaint them with the death of the father Hildargo, and to request that they would attend the interment of the body.

At midnight, a long train of the holy fathers passed through the castle gates, and crossing over the spacious courtyard, entered the hall.

The body was then brought down from the chamber, and borne by six domestics, followed by the fathers and choristers of the monastery, who solemnly chaunted the service to the dead; it was then laid on the steps of the altar, and the vaulted roofs of the chapel echoed to the solemn dirge. They then proceeded to the cemetery, attended by De Vortimer.

The time of night, the gloomy extensive vaults, on whose nearest walls the glare of the torches dimly flashed; while those at a greater distance were enveloped in murky darkness. The pale faces of the monks; the deep-toned voice of the superior, who was pronouncing the service to the dead; and the solemn dirge, which was lastly sung as the earth rattled on the lid of the coffin, formed altogether a scene that inspired even De Vortimer with solemn ideas; and he slowly retired from the cemetery involved in gloomy reflections.

The next morning as he was walking on the ramparts, he heard the well-known sounds of the horn at the castle-gate; and hastening to a tower that overlooked the gate, he beheld two knights with their pages waiting there for admission. Their persons were not then known to him, and he inwardly trembled for fear that they might be the bearers of unwelcome news. He, however, determined to know the purport

of their coming, and instantly descended from the ramparts; and as he was entering his apartments, the warden of the castle met him.

"My lord," said he, "two knights of noble aspect demand admittance to you."

"Know you who they are?" said De Vortimer.

"No," replied the warden; "they will not inform me; but by the golden rowels in their spurs, they are of the first order of knighthood; and the cloaks of the pages are highly emblazoned."

"Let, then," said Sir Orlando, "the officers of my household be assembled in the grand hall, and conduct the strangers into an apartment till all is ready to give them audience. Meantime be careful that their people hold no communication with mine."

The warden bowed, and hasted to obey the orders of Sir Orlando, who pre-

pared himself for the interview, with some apprehensions concerning what it could be which the knights had to speak to him about.

He habited himself in a sumptuous manner, and then descending from his apartment, he entered the hall.

At the upper end there was an elevated seat; on each side of which were ranged his pages and esquires, the officers of the household, and a band of armed soldiery. Sir Orlando now seated himself in the chair, and gave orders that the pages of the knights should be admitted to declare the names and rank of their masters, and the business they were charged with to Sir Orlando de Vortimer.

The warden who was charged with the message, retired to execute the commands of Sir Orlando; who with anxious expectation, which he ill endeavoured to conceal, awaited the answers of the pages.

CHAP. XXXIX.

THE Lady Gertrude de Percy, reflecting on the behaviour of Sir Orlando, and fearful that he might by some undue means get the Lady Anna into his power, thought that the most advisable steps she could take would be to make known the transactions to the king, and to request of him to appoint another guardian; and to order that Sir Orlando should quit the castle of Manstow, and give an account of the revenues of the domains attached to it, which had been paid into his hands.

The Lady Anna was greatly rejoiced at this step, which would remove from the castle also the monk Hildargo, who she was well assured was a creature of Sir Orlando's; and she beheld the mes-

senger depart the castle with delight, and waited his return with anxiety.

The eastern rampart was her favourite walk. She would frequently arise from her couch, and hastily putting on her garments, over which she threw her long black veil, would leave her chamber, and gaining the rampart, would stand there to view the regent of day, as slowly he appeared to rise out of the world of waters, which reflected his dazzling radiance.

There she would often stand gazing on the waves as they rolled on the beach below, or dashed against some sharp-pointed rocks which stretched far out into the sea, covering them with its white foam, sailing on the rough bosom of the ocean. She would also often observe the sportive sea-gull, which seemed to gambol with the storm; and the flocks of marine birds, which, arranging themselves in lines, hardily winged their course through the wide ærial space.

She loved also to watch the light sail of the distant bark, which skimmed swiftly out of sight; and fancy would paint it as freighted with some impatient lover, who toiling through the restless ocean to meet the beloved mistress of his affections, would chide the tardy motion of the vessel.

At other times she would pensively ruminate on her departed father, while the tear, occasioned by a thousand tender remembrances, would steal from either eye, and with a deep sigh she would wipe away the pearly drops of filial affection.

At other times she would think on the sable knight. She would call to her ideal view the assemblage of manly graces which adorned his expressive countenance; would remember his resistless courage in attacking the banditti, and his humane attentions to the wounded robber; and she sighed when she recalled to her mind his expressions

of sorrow, and the deep sighs that accompanied them: and she would herself sigh at the recollection.

She anxiously wished to know what it was that Sir Orlando had done, that he seemed so greatly exasperated against him. "Time will perhaps discover all," thought she; "and I shall know who this mysterious being, the sable knight, is, who has so innocently been the means of so much pain to me; and who by his attentions hath so greatly made amends for it." While indulging these reflections, a sigh would escape her, of which she knew not the cause.

The conduct of the Lady Gertrude de Percy to her was uniformly kind and attentive. She was, indeed, much attached to the Lady Anna, and pitied greatly her undeserved misfortunes; and felt resolved to protect her with all her power against the base attempts of Sir Orlando de Vortimer, who had himself so completely laid open his own schemes

to force the Lady Anna into a marriage, and by that means to get possession of her estates.

Some tales of his conduct to a lady he had married in Bretagne, had found their way to the ear of the Lady Gertrude, and had greatly contributed to open her eyes with respect to his disposition and his designs on the Lady Anna. His threats had rouzed her pride, and was not a little spur to her supplicating the king to grant a new guardian to the person and estates of the Lady Anna until she became of age.

The messenger who had been sent to the court, travelled with all possible haste to the king, who, on receiving the packet, without further demur, instantly ordered Sir William Gaveston to take on him, in conjunction with the Lady Gertrude de Percy, the guardianship of the person and estates of the Lady Anna; and directed the messenger instantly to proceed to the castle of the Lady Ger-

trude, to acquaint her with his directions.

This welcome information was received with the greatest delight by the Lady Anna, who now felt happy in the new arrangements, and waited for messengers from Manstow castle to proceed thither to receive her new guardian.

Meanwhile the king directed Sir William Gaveston, and one of his officers of state, to proceed thither, and to notify to Sir Orlando his pleasure, and also that he should deliver up the castle, and render a just account of the revenues of the estates within three days from their arrival.

Charged with these instructions, Sir William and the king's officer immediately set out; and on their appearing before the gates of Manstow castle, they were admitted into a chamber of the castle until Sir Orlando should be ready to receive them in the grand hall.

At length the warden of the castle

came, and delivered the orders of Sir Orlando, that the pages should be admitted to announce their names, and the purport of their coming.

Sir William, however, directed that they should not comply with this haughty demand, but merely state, that they bore a message from the king.

When the warden conducted the pages into the presence of Sir Orlando, whom they found seated in a chair of state, with his officers ranged on each side of him. "Advance," said he, in a commanding tone, "and declare the names and rank of your masters, and the purport of their coming."

The pages bowed low, and replied, "We may not disobey our masters, in that they have forbade us to resolve your questions; but thus far we are commanded to say, that they bear the king's mandate to thee Sir Orlando."

At this, De Vortimer trembled and turned pale; recollecting, however, his

resolutions, he bade them retire, and conduct the knights, their masters, to the hall, that they might transact the business they were charged with.

The two knights now entered, but what was Sir Orlando's astonishment when he beheld Sir William Gaveston, with whom he had formerly been so intimate, and who now seemed to forget that he had ever seen him before; and distantly saluted him, as did the other knight, who approaching Orlando, said, "The king, my master, hath sent me to inform you, Sir Orlando de Vortimer, that you are within three days, to deliver up the guardianship of the Lady Anna, which he hath been pleased to entrust to Sir William Gaveston and the Lady Gertrude de Percy; and also, that you render a just account of the revenues of the domains her possessions, at the same time."

"And suppose I choose to doubt your right, Sir William, to this trust,

where is your authority to support it?" "We bear," continued the officer, "the king's mandate, sealed with his own signet, which we will shew you."

Thus saying, he unfolded a scroll, which one of his pages bore; and Sir Orlando read the order, which although he well knew to be correct, yet he affected to doubt it. "I believe the whole," said he, "to be a base fabrication; nor will I attend to such a message." "Your despising this authority, Sir Orlando, will bear heavily on you; we warn you to beware the consequences."

"What, do you threaten me?" said Sir Orlando, in a furious voice, "know that I am not used to hear such harsh language."

"Nor we," said Sir William Gaveston, "to hear that we are the bearers of base fabrications. Which speech you should dearly answer for, were you without your castle gates."

"What," said Sir Orlando, "do you

threaten me in my castle ? By heavens it is too much. Guards," said he, " seize those insolent knights, whose purport it is to insult me."

All was now a scene of confusion ; the soldiers rushed on the knights, who drew their swords, and prepared for a desperate resistance. Sir William darted on Sir Orlando, and would have cut him down, but was at that moment felled with a battle-axe ; the other knight, with the pages, fought for a long time, and the marble floor of the hall was covered with blood, but unfortunately, while he was in the midst of the battle, in aiming a fierce blow at a soldier, who attacked him, his foot, treading on some clotted blood, slipped, and he fell, and was soon overpowered by numbers, who rushed on him, and forced his sword out of his hands. The pages seeing the fate of the knights, forbore the sanguine strife, and yielded themselves to the armed force of Sir

Orlando, who now ordered Sir William Gaveston, who was insensible from the wound he had received, and the other knight, to be confined in separate dungeons, as also the pages who attended them.

This being complied with, De Vortimer had leisure to reflect on the proceedings of the day; he felt that he had now greatly widened the breach which had been made in the good opinion the king might have formerly entertained of him, in thus ill treating his messenger. Still, however, he hoped if no other accusations were laid against him than what alluded to the Lady Anna, that he would be able to represent the insulting conduct of Sir William Gaveston and the officer he had sent with him, in such a manner as to gloss over in some degree, the impropriety of his conduct; and if that did not avail, he was prepared to meet the worst; and from the walls of Manstow to repel those who might be sent to punish him

for his disobedience. Full of these ideas he waited for the further movements of the king with anxious expectation.

The Lady Gertrude de Percy, not having received any messenger from Sir William Gaveston, dispatched one to Manstow, who returned with the information that the castle gates were kept constantly shut; that the most cruel exactions had been made amongst the peasantry on the estate, to provide for the troops that had lately marched into it; that no one was permitted either to go in or out of it, and that it was generally suppossed that the castle would soon be attacked, though by whom or for what reason was unknown.

Greatly astonished at this information, the Lady Gertrude sent immediately a courier to the castle of Sir William Gaveston; but from thence she only learnt that he had proceeded to Manstow, and that he had not been heard of since.

The knowledge she had obtained of

Sir Orlando, made her conceive the worst, and the Lady Emillia, Sir Gaveston's wife, by the advice of the Lady Gertrude, sent a message to Manstow castle, to know where Sir William was, but he was detained a prisoner there by order of Sir Orlando.

Full of anxious fears, the Lady Emillia proceeded to the king, and there disclosed the extraordinary circumstances that had taken place at Manstow, and supplicated that he would order such steps to be taken, as would restore her lord to her: and this the monarch immediately assented to.

Some days after the Lady Gertrude had sent to the Lady Emillia, Anna received a letter from a breathless messenger, which she, with much astonishment, perused; its contents were as follow:

"The Knight of the Sable Cloud de-
"mands the honour of coming forward
"as the champion of injured innocence,

" and of exerting himself in restoring
" to the Lady Anna her rightful posses-
" sions, which have been so unjustly de-
" tained by the base Sir Orlando de Vor-
" timer."

Anna, greatly astonished at this packet, immediately went to the Lady Gertrude, to whom she communicated the contents, and requested her advice how she was to proceed.

The Lady Gertrude de Percy bade her accept of his offers; yet as it would not be consistent with female delicacy, that she should write to him, the Lady de Percy herself answered the billet, thus:

" The Lady de Percy, as guardian to
" the Lady Anna de Vortimer, trusting
" that the designs of the Knight of the
" Sable Cloud are those of a true knight,
" accepts of his services and offers to
" obtain from Sir Orlando de Vortimer,
" the possessions of the Lady Anna,
" which he unjustly detains from her."

The letter was instantly forwarded, and Anna retired to her chamber, to ruminate on the singular occurrence. "Generous stranger," thought she, "will thou then, regardless of dangers and difficulties, thus nobly fly to the succour of a damsel who is almost unknown to thee!—Alas!" thought she, "that thou who art so nobly minded, shouldst bear within thee a heart so ill at ease."

Anna now breathed forth a prayer for his safety, and looking out of the window of her oratory, beheld the messenger quickly proceeding on the road to Manstow, bearing the important packet from the Lady Gertrude de Percy.

When she descended to partake of the mid-day repast, the Lady Gertrude observed the pale rose which blossomed in the countenance of Anna; and tenderly inquired the cause. "I hope, my dear Anna," said she, "that the fears you may entertain for the safety of your

knight, have not caused your countenance to wear so pale a hue."

Anna blushed at this unexpected question; and with some confusion, replied, "That she had been agitated at the unexpected occurrences of the morning, but she trusted that those who engaged in a just cause, would be protected by a watchful Providence, who would confound the guilty, and deliver them into the power of those who so nobly asserted the cause of the oppressed."

The Lady Gertrude saw from the confusion of her speech, that the sable knight possessed greatly her interest, and forbore to question her on so delicate a subject; while Anna, who reflected on what she had said, condemned herself for the forcible and unguarded manner in which she had expressed herself, and which brought a crimson blush into her cheeks. She was, however, in some measure relieved by her kind aunt, who soon changed the conversation.

Anna gladly retired in the evening to her chamber, and opening her casement, surveyed the pale regent of night, as it glittered on the ruffled surface of the deep, while her thoughts were turned towards the unknown knight, who had still bore her in his memory.

She continued for a long time at the casement in deep ruminations; she thought of the tournament, at which the knight had conducted himself so gallantly; then of his attention when he met her benighted on the desolate road; after that, his attacking the banditti. Suddenly she started from the casement, while a blush overspread her countenance. "I do nothing," thought she, "but think of the sable knight; and what is more, by an inconsiderate speech I have given reason to the Lady Gertrude to think I do so."

She now entered her oratory, and after she had commended herself to the protection of Providence, she courted the

lenient powers of sleep, who soon sealed up her lovely eyes, and the world and all its cares were for a while excluded from her thoughts.

The next morning, to divert herself, she passed through the castle gates, and descending a winding path, found herself on the beach; here she beheld the waves, as impelled by them behind, they rolled on the shore; she could not help being surprised at the situation of the eastern rampart, which hung far over the base of the rock which supported it, and threatened destruction on those below.

Continuing her walk, she entered a beautiful valley, in the bottom of which meandered a rivulet, till coming to the extremity, it rushed over some rugged rocks into the ocean; the dashing of the waters, the melodious notes of the feathered race, all combining to make this place most interesting; and in the contemplation of the sublime and beau-

tiful works of nature, Anna passed her time.

Crossing the rivulet by a rude bridge formed of the stems of some large trees, Anna ascended the opposite side of the valley, which commanded a beautiful view of the castle, which rose with majestic grandeur on the opposite hill. Its huge walls, strengthened by enormous buttresses, the lofty towers, with their embattled turrets, and the great extent of the grey edifice, which was now brightened by the rays of the sun; and the rugged rock on which it was built, formed a striking contrast with the luxuriant vale below.

The valley now winding round the rock on which the castle was built, became much broader, and was inhabited by a great number of peasants, who reared their humble edifices in this enchanting spot.

Anna proceeded in her walk, greatly delighted at the various beautiful views

that every where presented themselves. At length, however, she was apprehensive her long stay would create uneasiness in the mind of the Lady Gertrude, and she descended into the valley, and entering one of the huts, requested the peasant who inhabited it, to shew her the nearest way to the castle gates; since to return the way she came, would have greatly fatigued her.

The peasant cheerfully complied, and soon conducted her to a path which brought her into the broad road that led to the gates. She now rewarded the man for his trouble, and arriving at the barbacan, passed through a small postern, and was soon in her own apartment. Greatly fatigued with her long walk, she sent an excuse to her aunt for her not appearing at the morning repast; and when she had rested for a few hours, she went to the Lady Gertrude to inform her of the pleasure she had derived from her morning's excursion.

Some days now elapsed, and Anna frequently repaired to the window of her oratory, which commanded a view of the road from Manstow; to see if any messenger was approaching with tidings from the sable knight. The time in which she might have expected to have heard from him was now arrived, and no person appeared.

She became dull and melancholy. "Good Heavens!" thought she, "if the generous unknown knight should have lost his life in my cause, I never shall be happy. I shall never forgive myself for consenting to allow him to become my champion. Perhaps he lies at this moment a pale corpse, blackening in the air, without the common rites of burial performed, or passing bell tolled—a victim to his generous friendship!"

While she thought on these melancholy scenes, her heart, full of grief, at length vented itself; and the prospect before her became dim with the frequent tear which started from her eyes.

When she had recovered in some measure her tranquillity, she descended, and endeavoured in conversation with the Lady Gertrude, to forget the griefs that hung heavy at her heart. Vain, however, were her attempts to hide the sorrow that oppressed her. The Lady Gertrude perceived it, and attributed it to its true cause; for she became anxious herself to hear tidings from the sable knight or Sir William Gaveston.

She therefore mentioned to the Lady Anna, that she was determined to send a messenger the next morning with letters both to Sir William Gaveston and the sable knight, to know what had been done at Manstow castle.

The Lady Anna was greatly pleased at hearing the intentions of her kind aunt, and that night enjoyed a more undisturbed repose than she had done for some time past.

She forbore taking her usual walk the next morning; and when she came down, beheld the Lady Gertrude deli-

vering the packets to the messenger, and giving him his instructions. The man then set out, and the Lady Anna offered up a prayer to heaven for his speedy return, that she might be freed from the miserable state of suspense she was in.

When she retired to her oratory, she beheld the messenger proceeding quickly along. She kept her eye on him some time; however, a rising hill would intercept her view; at another time, a cloud of dust would hide him from her sight. Now he was no longer visible; and she retired from her chamber.

Though her mind was in some degree eased by the messenger being sent; yet she thought that the great delay of news from the sable knight, boded no good; and she began to think, that the state of uncertainty she was in, might perhaps be a state of bliss, compared with what the information of the messenger might produce.

The chapel bell now tolled for prayers, and Anna immediately went down, and prostrating herself before the altar, in a fervent prayer implored the Deity that her ears might be blessed with happy tidings. She then prayed, as was her constant custom, for the repose of her dear father's soul; and when at length she had concluded her supplications, she felt a kind of placid melancholy remain, in the room of the more turbulent passions which had destroyed her repose.

The Lady Gertrude saw and pitied her situation, and endeavoured by converse to make her forgetful of the causes of her inquietude. She therefore retired not till a late hour; and was pleased to behold, when they parted for the night, a faint smile irradiate the coutenance of the Lady Anna. " I trust, my love," said she, " that to-morrow will bring us the long-expected tidings, which will restore us to our wonted serenity, by relieving our minds from the heavy weight

of uncertainty which now oppresses them."

Anna sighed, while she fervently prayed that it might; and kissing her aunt, retired to her apartment. The late hour, for the Lady Gertrude had purposely kept her up, that she might enjoy a sounder repose, had its desired effect; and she sunk into a tranquil slumber.

When she arose in the morning, her first care was to examine the road, to see if any messenger was approaching. A blue mist hung over the distant mountains; and when the road was perceptible, it presented not the wished-for sight of a horseman from Manstow.

Her orisons now occupied her some time; and when she had made an end of them, she again looked towards the road. The mist was now chaced away by the powerful rays of the sun; and Anna, as she strained her eyes to the farthest part of the road, which was on

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the top of a distant hill, thought she beheld a cloud of dust. She kept her eye intently on it. One while it disappeared; then the dust rose again. Now no such signs were visible; and Anna sighing, concluded what she saw must have been caused by the wind.

A nearer cloud of dust now again occupied her attention; and she fancied she could discover a horseman. She was going to run to her aunt with the intelligence; but fearful lest she might be mistaken, she continued to watch the object, which she now discerned to move, and at last she plainly descried two horsemen.

She then informed the Lady Gertrude of the circumstance; who immediately accompanied her to one of the turret-chambers, which commanded a better view of the country from its height and situation, than the casement of the oratory of the Lady Anna; and they now discovered that one of the horsemen was

the messenger who had been sent from the Lady Gertrude, and the other bore something in his hands, which he raised on high; but what it was, they were unable at that distance to discover.

CHAP. XL.

The robber, who had mounted the horse that Edmund rode, proceeded swiftly from the danger that threatened him from Sir William Gaveston's party, through the forest of Guirche. Edmund, who was too young to judge of the terrible situation he was in, clung close to the robber, fearing he should be thrown off the horse by the branches of the trees which they came against; not being able to avoid them on account of the gloomy darkness that prevailed in the forest.

They continued for a considerable time in the same direction, till the road branched off into smaller tracks. Here the man stopped, and seemed to hesitate, as if to discover the right way;

and at length turned into a narrow path. Ancient trees here formed a close avenue; their mouldering roots clogged with clusters of the moss, and the trailing stems of the brambles frequently entangled the feet of the horse.

Edmund not seeing or hearing his mother, began to experience sensations of fear; and started when the robber sought to clear a passage for the horse, by cutting away the briars with his falchion.

At this instant Edmund perceived before him the flame of a large fire; and the robber stopped, and looking at it, endeavoured to turn the horse round; but the trees were so very close that he effected it with difficulty. The loud and hollow blast of a horn now echoed through the forest. It was succeeded by a violent rustling amongst the underwood, and five or six men instantly surrounded the robber and Edmund.

"Stop," said one of them, "and

account to us what your business is in this part of the forest. It seems you come to pry upon us." "No," replied the robber, who seemed much alarmed; "believe me, Sir Knights, I have mistaken the way."

Edmund, who listened to the conversation, no sooner heard the robber address them by the title of knights than he immediately spoke to the man who was nearest to him, and declared that he had been forced away from his mother who was travelling through the forest. On hearing this, one of them instantly pulled the man off the horse, and secured him; then assuring Edmund that they would endeavour to find out where his mother was, they took hold of the horse's bridle, and led him through some intricate windings; when they suddenly stopped at the sound of the clashing of swords, which now smote on their ears.

It seems the robber had by some

means loosed the rope which confined his arms, and drawing his sword, suddenly assaulted the knight who had the charge of him, whom he severely wounded; while the knight, disregarding the pain, furiously attacked the robber, and in a few moments laid him breathless on the ground with a deep gash in his side.

" This is most unlucky," said one of the knights; " for now we know not in what direction to seek the lady, who has so unfortunately lost her son. Were you long in company with the robber?" demanded the knight.

" As near as I can imagine, about two hours," replied Edmund. The party now seemed in great perplexity what to do. " We will, however," said one, " immediately set out, and search through the forest to rescue the unfortunate lady, should we happily find her; meantime one of our party will conduct you

to our habitations, while we will lose no time in the search."

The knight who had been wounded now advanced, and offered to conduct Edmund to their dwellings; who alighted from his horse, and with a grace that surprised the knights that were standing round him, expressed his thanks to them for their generous intentions. "My mother," said he, with a deep sigh, "should you be so fortunate as to find her, will join with me in most grateful acknowledgments."

The knights now departed, leaving him alone with the knight who had been wounded, who walked with some difficulty, for the robber had hurt his leg. Coming to an open part of the forest, by the light of a large fire, Edmund observed several cottages; to one of which the knight conducted him.

An attendant now lit a lamp, and Edmund gazed on the walls of the cottage.

They were neatly stuccoed, and against them were suspended many lances, cross-bows, casques, bucklers, and other parts of armour. The knight had on a coat of mail, a sword and a casque, which was crested with the bristles of a wild boar; and in his hand he carried a boar-spear. He now rested himself on a bench; and Edmund took off the light casque he wore, and sighing deeply, leant against the door-case, in hopes of hearing the knights returning.

When the knight was baring his leg in order to have the wound dressed, Edmund came up to offer his services, and the knight looking earnestly at him, said, "Your countenance recalls to my remembrance a dear friend I once had, and who, alas! is now no more. Tell me, I pray you, your name?"

"My name," said Edmund, "is Edmund de St. Clair."

"De St. Clair!" said the knight,

with emotion; "And was your father the Baron de St. Clair?"

"He was," rejoined Edmund.

"Come then to my arms," said the knight, "thou valuable relic of my esteemed, my ever lamented friend." He then tenderly embraced Edmund. "Good Heavens! "and is it the Lady Agnes, your mother, whose absence you deplore; whom I likewise," said he with a deep drawn sigh, "well knew?"

"The same," said Edmund, sighing.

"How unfortunate," returned the knight, "that I am not able to fly to her rescue! How happy I should be to render a service to the wife and son of my dear departed friend."

Osberne, for that was the name of the knight, disregarding his wound, gave way to bitter expressions of grief and regret. "And where," said he, "was the Lady de St. Clair going, when she met with this misfortune?"

" She is no longer called by that name," said Edmund, sorrowfully; " she is now the wife of Sir Orlando de Vortimer."

" Alas! then, I have reason to fear the worst," said the knight, " for I have heard strange tales of Sir Orlando. Had the Lady Agnes any attendants with her?" " None, but the guide," replied Edmund.

" Tell me then, St. Clair," said Osberne, " was she flying from the persecutions of Sir Orlando?"

" She was," said Edmund.

" Even so I feared. But whatever are your wrongs, Edmund, behold Osberne, your friend; I transfer the affection I bore your father, to his son. Relate to me, I intreat you, what you know of the comportment of Sir Orlando to your mother."

Edmund then made mention of every circumstance which he was acquainted with; the refusal of his mother to comply with the pecuniary demands of Sir

Orlando; of the loss of the papers; and of the intention of his mother to make a complaint to the king of the base conduct of Sir Orlando.

Osberne listened with attention, his countenance shewing the emotions of his heart at the interesting tale of Edmund. When he had made an end, a distant horn was heard. "My brethren are returning, heaven grant they may have have met with success."

Edmund instantly rushed out of the cottage; a loud brushing through the distant foliage was heard, and a party of horsemen came up on a full gallop; on seeing Edmund, they stopped. "We have been unsuccesful in our search," said one who was almost breathless; "but as soon as the dawn breaks, we will renew it, and I hope with success."

Edmund's heart swelled at this intelligence; he had scarely power to express his thanks, and turning into the cottage, sat down, involved in melancholy.

Osberne said all that he could to comfort the hapless youth, but in vain; and if Edmund raised his eyes, it was to the casement, to see if the dawn had pierced through the foliage of the shady forest.

Thus passed the night; and now a ruddy light began to enliven the gloomy forest; the shrill tone of the horn was now heard, and soon after some of the knights entered the cottage. They were all habited in the same manner as Osberne; their surcoats were formed of the skins of wild boars, red deer, and other inhabitants of the forest.

They saluted Osberne, and inquired after his wound, which, though not of great consequence, yet was sufficient to prevent him from accompanying them on their search. They endeavoured to comfort Edmund with hopes of their returning with his mother, who begged to be permitted to accompany them, but this they would not comply with.

" My friend," said one, " you are yet too young to encounter the danger we may be exposed to; this forest, which is of vast extent, is infested by a banditti, where their residence is we are ignorant, or else they would have been soon rooted out; besides your youth would ill endure the fatigues of the day. Stay with Osberne, and be assured that we will exert ourselves to the utmost, as it is our duty to rescue the oppressed lady, your mother."

" Heaven speed you," said Osberne; " my friends, I know you will do even as you say; nor is it necessary for me to observe, as a spur to your endeavours, that in this youth you behold the son of the Baron de St. Clair, my beloved, lamented friend."

The knights now hastily saluted Edmund; and their attendants hurrying them, their steeds they quickly mounted, and were swiftly out of sight.

Osberne now entreated Edmund to

repose himself on his couch, comforting him with the hope of the knights being successful in their undertaking. Harassed with fatigue and grief, Edmund, at length, complied with Osberne's solicitations, and for a while forgot his woes in the arms of sleep.

Osberne meanwhile taking a boar-spear, supported his steps to a neighbouring cabin, and there rested himself after his watchful night.

The knights in the meantime were rapidly proceeding through the forest in two parties; one of them, at length, discovered the bodies of several men whose appearance bespoke them newly slain, with several bucklers, broken spears, and swords lying about; from this circumstance they concluded, that the banditti had met with some party who had overcome them, and released the lady; and they therefore turned about their steps towards their sylvan abodes. In their way they met with

the other party, who informed them that they had not been able to discover any signs of the Lady Agnes.

Edmund awaking from the short, but refreshing slumbers he had taken, found himself alone in the hut; he arose from the couch, and leaving the cabin, was struck with the beauty of the surrounding scenery. The sun was now fast rising to his meridian altitude, and his beams enlivened the dark recesses of the forest. An open space of some extent appeared before him; on each side were rows of cabins similar to that in which he was. The ancient trees that enclosed the space, were of great height, and formed a rural wall around it; they were decorated with the skeleton heads of wild boars, and other trophies of the spoils of the hunters.

As Edmund was gazing on these rural abodes, the hollow horn echoed through the forest. Edmund turned quickly to where the sound proceeded; and the

knights appeared advancing up the avenue that led to their habitations; with grief he observed that his mother was not with them, and with a slow and melancholy pace he advanced to meet them.

As gently as they were able, they broke to him their ill success, and particularly mentioned the bodies they had seen. Edmund then related to them the circumstance of their meeting with a party while they were in the hands of the banditti, and of his mother imploring their protection; at which moment the man who had mounted his horse, instantly rode off with him.

The knights then concluded that the Lady Agnes was safe, as there were no bodies on the ground, but those who seemed to have been the banditti; and Osberne, who now came forth, comforted Edmund with the assurance that he would, as soon as his wound would permit him, go to the chateau de St.

Clair to endeavour to learn tidings of his mother.

Edmund's mind was in some degree composed by the general opinion, of his mother's safety, and of the promises of Osberne; and hope now animated his intelligent countenance.

The attendants approached to take the steeds belonging to the knights, who dismounted, and invited Edmund to partake of their sylvan fare. A large fire was now kindled with dry weeds, and the carcase of a stag was placed before it. The knights entered into conversation with Edmund, and were greatly interested by the manly behaviour and address of the youth.

When the repast was ready, they repaired to a cabin, where, on a large table was placed the roasted stag, of which they partook; and after drinking a few flasks of wine, they separated. Edmund retired with Osberne; and when they were seated in his cabin, thus addressed him:

" You are no doubt, surprised, my friend," said he, " at meeting a society such as ours, in the centre of this vast forest. We are called the Knights of the Forest. The institution is of great antiquity. We have all taken vows of celibacy ; and, except when engaged in the wars of the sovereign, we pass our time in hunting and warlike exercises. The whole of this forest belongs to the society, by a grant from the king, for the services we have performed in the field. I," said he, with a deep sigh, " enrolled myself among these brave knights, from a disgust to the world. There are others too who have done the same, and some have entered from a love to the independent rural life we lead amongst these sylvan shades."

Osberne was now silent, he seemed to be involved in a melancholy reverie, he frequently sighed. Edmund observed his agitation, and respecting his sorrows, ruminated himself on the doubtful

situation of his mother, and in a few moments exhibited as deep a picture of melancholy as Osberne.

Thus for some time they indulged their mutual sorrows, till at length Osberne broke the long silence. "I shall now, my friend," said he, "wait impatiently for the recovery of my wound, when I trust to communicate to you tidings of comfort on my return from the chateau de St. Clair."

"And may not I accompany you there?" said Edmund with a supplicating look. "I think it would not be advisable," replied Osberne after some consideration. "It might be attended with needless danger to yourself, for you may depend that Sir Orlando, to possess your estates, would not scruple to imbrue his hands in your blood. I draw my conclusion from what I have heard of the actions of De Vortimer—reflect how he has treated your mother."

"For that," said Edmund, starting

from his seat, "I trust I shall one day be able to punish him." Osberne saw the emotions of the youth; the rage that appeared in his countenance, the lowering brow, and the deep crimson tinge in the cheek. "You," said he with delight, "you are indeed the exact representative of your dear father; just so I have seen him appear when he was justly irritated. Yes, my dear Edmund, I will be your tutor, under my instructions I hope you will be able to meet this black adversary to his face, and punish him as he justly merits."

Edmund, delighted at this idea, seized hold of Osberne's hand. "Would to heaven," said he, "I was now able, how eagerly would I fly, my beloved mother, to punish him for his base treatment of you." He now paced the cabin with a quick step, he seemed to have thrown aside the youth, and to have put on the aspect and thoughts of a man.

Osberne well pleased, surveyed him,

and kept silence, not wishing to interrupt the bent of his thoughts. "And how long do you think," said Edmund at length, "it will be before I am able to meet De Vortimer? I am impatient for the happy hour."

"Should I be so fortunate as to see your mother the Lady Agnes," said Osberne, "I shall request of her to allow you to stay some time with me that I may perfect you in your military exercises."

At the mention of his mother a sudden gloom overspread his intelligent features, and he sat down and hid his face in his mantle.

"Come my young friend," said Osberne, "I will not permit you to indulge this grief—hope for the best; you have every reason to believe your mother was taken from the banditti, and doubtless she is now safe, and deploring your loss, which I trust I shall soon be able to ease her fears about; believe me Edmund,

no endeavours shall be wanting on my part."

Edmund pressed the hand of the kind Osberne. "I will," said he, "endeavour to do as you wish: I will not indulge my grief, I will wait, in the hope of hearing the joyful intelligence of the safety of my mother from you on your return; and should her will be, that I shall stay with you, I shall obey with delight, and under your auspices I hope to be able to insure a just revenge."

Here the conversation ended, the shades of night had enveloped the earth in its gloomy mantle, and Osberne invited Edmund to repose himself on a couch formed of the skins of wild beasts slain in the hunt, on which Edmund threw himself.

Osberne's wound was now fast recovering, with the assistance of a staff, he walked out the next morning with Edmund to see the knights at their exercises; some on horseback were

practising the various evolutions with the lance, the sword and the battle-axe; others were wrestling, hurling the javelin, and shooting with the arrow at a distant mark.

Edmund looked on delighted, and longed to be a partaker of the warlike exercises; he felt his bosom glow to engage in the mock combat, and to carry off the prize attached to the victor. Osberne now called for his and Edmund's horses, which being brought, they mounted, and rode slowly through the forest. Osberne conversing on different subjects with the young Edmund, who he found possessed a store of sense very unusual at his years.

In their ride they saw at a distance a cottage, and wishing to enquire if they knew any thing of the Lady Agnes, they rode up to it, which happened to belong to the wood-cutter, where that hapless lady had passed the night when brought there by Sir

William Gaveston's people; greatly surprised, Edmund learnt that news, and the strange way that she was afterwards missed; all his fears he thought were now realized, but still Osberne ventured to bid him hope for the best, and promised at the end of the third day to set forward for the chateau.

This in some measure tended to compose the agitations of Edmund; and in silent melancholy he retraced his steps by the side of Osberne, to the cabins of the Knights of the Forest, a party of whom they met, laden with slain deer and a wild boar, which, after a desperate encounter, they had slain, and were conveying in triumph to their abodes.

They soon noticed the gloom in the countenances of Osberne and the young Edmund, but, however, forbore any enquiry, lest they should only encrease their sorrow by demanding a recital of what had caused it.

Edmund chided the tardy hours that

intervened between the time when Osberne had promised to go to the chateau, and although he dreaded the result of his enquiries; yet he felt that a certainty would be more preferable than the horrible state of suspense in which he was involved. Meanwhile his engaging manners and conversation made his society courted by the other knights, who felt interested for his unfortunate situation.

The morning of the third day now arrived; Osberne, whose wound was nearly healed, vaulted on his horse, as did Edmund to accompany him a little way through the forest.

"My dear Edmund," said Osberne, "if I should be so very unfortunate as to be the bearer of bad news, I shall not know how to disclose it to you; take this as a signal.—If I have pleasing intelligence to communicate to you, my visor on my return will be up, but if on the contrary, I shall wear it down. I

hope to be here again on the fourth day: do not, however, expect me, as I shall stay as long as it may be necessary to gain all the intelligence possible."

Having said this, he bid Edmund adieu, and spurring his horse, was quickly hid by the intervening trees. Edmund watched him till he was no longer to be seen, he then listened to the sound of the horse's feet, and when that had ceased, he turned back, and indulging a melancholy, unusual in his years, he arrived at the cottage of Osberne, and giving his steed to the attendant, endeavoured to compose the agitation he was in, before he should meet the knights at the hour of repast.

CHAP. XLI.

The friendly knights endeavoured to amuse the sorrowful Edmund till the return of Osberne. They invited him to the chace, and in the eager pursuit, a smile would sometimes escape him when he found himself nearest to the wolf, or had with some dexterity implanted a javelin in the wild boar.

The idea of danger was unknown to him, and even the knights would frequently admire his coolness and intrepidity, but after the moment of exultation, sadness again clouded his features, and he would withdraw himself from the party, and in some deep recess, think of his beloved mother, from which distressing thoughts the knights would

rouse him by the cheerful sounds of the horn.

The third day now arrived, and Edmund with a beating heart, often turned to view that part of the forest where Osberne would pass on his return; evening came, but brought with it no intelligence of the friendly knight, and Edmund who had stretched far into the mazes of the forest in hopes of seeing him, returned to his cabin greatly fatigued.

Early the next morning Edmund was awakened by a noise at the door of the cabin; he hastily arose from his couch. It was Osberne.—Edmund looked at him, he grew pale, and but for the support of the knight, would have fallen—the fatal visor was down.

Osberne sighed deeply, but spoke not. "O gracious heaven!" said Edmund, "Can it be possible! and have I then lost my dear, my beloved mother for ever!" "Be resigned," said Osberne,

in a trembling voice, " to this great calamity."

This said, he unbound his casque, and Edmund looking on him, beheld his face pale and agitated; Osberne turned from his view, while Edmund with bitter tears deplored his mother's loss. Some time was passed in this melancholy manner, when Edmund looking up to Osberne, " Tell me," said he, " my dear and only friend, tell me, I beseech you, the particulars."

Osberne, who was resting his exhausted frame on his couch, thus replied: " My dear Edmund, as soon as I left you, I proceeded with all possible expedition, and by the next morning's dawn I arrived at a hamlet which lies near the chateau de St. Clair. I there enquired concerning you and the Lady Agnes." " Ah," said an aged peasant, " sad news has just arrived here concerning them. It seems that they were travelling through the forest of Guische,

when they were taken by a banditti; and afterwards Sir William Gaveston's people meeting them, slew the greater part of them, and released the Lady Agnes." It then appeared that you were missing, and that the Lady Agnes was afterwards taken from a cottage, which you will recollect," said Osberne, "must be that where we made some enquiries; and that you were both murdered by the banditti. The great improbability of this story leads me to doubt it: one part we know to be a mere fabrication, for they could not know any thing concerning you; and I think you may still entertain hopes that your mother is yet safe. De Vortimer is raising a superb monument to the memory of your mother, and greatly do I suspect that there is some vile deed that shuns the light. I did not stop at that cottage in my enquiries, and from one peasant I learnt that as soon as it was known in the chateau, that the Lady Agnes and her son

had fled, no parties were sent out after her, but that the monk, in the disguise of a peasant, and two ill-looking ruffians were seen coming from the castle, and mount their horses, which were in an unfrequented part of the wood, and they immediately proceeded towards the forest of Guirche; that a few days after, the two men returned to the chateau, and spread the report that the Lady Agnes and her son Edmund were both murdered; no parties were sent to seek the bodies, or any further enquiries made; and the monk was supposed to be absent on a pilgrimage. All these things considered, my dear Edmund," said Osberne, "I think there are yet hopes—endeavour to recover your spirits; our enquiries shall not stop here. Meanwhile I will instruct you in what it is fitting that you should know ere you can demand of Sir Orlando, your estates, and what has been done with your mother."

This last speech seemed to rouse Edmund from the stupor of sorrow into which he was plunged. "Yes," said he, "I will yet hope that my mother has not fallen a sacrifice to the murderous De Vortimer, and I will do whatever you wish."

Osberne's countenance brightened at this. "My dear Edmund," said he, "you have greatly delighted me; endeavour to throw aside this unavailing grief, think only of punishing Sir Orlando for his base treatment of your mother."

Edmund, though he quitted not the cabin for several days, yet reflecting on what Osberne had said to him, he gradually recovered his dejection of spirits, and only when alone did he indulge his melancholy ruminations.

Osberne immediately commenced on instructing his beloved pupil in the military exercises, he procured for him a coat of mail, a casque of shining steel,

and armed him with a sword; he now practised him to vault on a horse in his armour, to scale walls (erected for the purpose), to leap over ditches under the same incumbrance, to wield the battle-axe, and to ride the most fiery horses, for in the government of the steed, consisted one of the chief accomplishments of a knight.

Edmund soon became a proficient in these exercises; he for a while gave his whole attention to them, he was seldom without his bow (in which he greatly delighted,) in his hand, and was become very expert in using it, as also the javelin. He now partook with the knights in their exercises, and accompanied them in the hunt, in which he generally distinguished himself.

One day as they were pursuing a ferocious boar, he suddenly turned about; and Edmund, who happened to be nearest to him, wounded him with a javelin in the side. The enraged animal

instantly darted on Edmund, who drawing his sword, he for a while kept him at bay with its sharp point. The knights perceiving his danger, instantly rode up to his assistance; but he requested they would not interfere; when reining back their steeds, they gazed on the fierce encounter, with some emotions for the safety of Edmund, whom they feared was too young to maintain so severe a conflict.

Gnashing his dreadful tusks, the boar endeavoured to seize him by the leg; but Edmund severely wounded him, and in the instant that the savage animal drew back, Edmund quitted his steed, fearful lest he should be hurt. The horse, who was much frightened, soon left the place; and Edmund beheld the boar now rushing furiously at him. Taking his spear, he firmly awaited the attack; and as the animal was springing on him, he thrust his spear with all his strength into his throat. The knights were loud in their applauses at Edmund's

steady and determined conduct; and that day he had the honour to preside at the board, and to carve up the animal he had so valiantly subdued.

Osberne viewed with delight the progress that Edmund made: he succeeded in all he undertook; and convening his brethren, he proposed to them that Edmund should receive the honour of knighthood from the senior knight.

They were unanimous in their consent; and Osberne, delighted, brought to Edmund the glad tidings, which he heard with much satisfaction. He was now committed to the care of father Oswald, confessor to the society, who instructed him in his religious duties. Edmund now passed whole nights in the chapel, which was erected in the forest; there he devoutly prayed, that he might be able to punish Sir Orlando for his mother's injuries; as for his own, he thought not of them.

The day at length arrived on which

Edmund was to be created a knight. Early in the morning he was led by Osberne from the cottage, attended by the knights in procession to the chapel; and advancing to the altar, with his sword slung in a scarf about his neck, he then presented it to father Oswald, who blessed it, and returned it again to Edmund. He then proceeded with a solemn step to the place where he was to be knighted. This ceremony was to be performed in the area, a space which was in front of the residences of the knights; and a throne was erected, on which sat Hugo de Montmorency, the senior knight.

Edmund having arrived at the throne, kneeled down before the senior; the other knights, clad in armour, with their visors down, ranged themselves on each side, and kept a profound silence. Edmund in the meanwhile delivered his sword to the knight. "What is your motive, Edmund de St. Clair, for de-

siring the honour of knighthood?" demanded Hugo de Montmorency.

"To defend the Christian religion," firmly replied Edmund; "to protect widows, orphans, and all who are oppressed; and to keep the truths of God."

"And wilt thou then bind thyself by a solemn and irrevocable oath to perform what thou sayest?"

"I will," replied Edmund.

Father Oswald now advanced, and with great solemnity administered the oath to him. Osberne now approached Edmund, and put on his spurs; then the other knights brought his coat of mail, and afterwards the several pieces of armour for the other parts of his body; and last of all, Osberne girt him with the sword.

Hugo de Montmorency then arose from his throne, and Edmund kneeling down, received the accolade, which was three gentle strokes with the flat of his

sword on the shoulder, saying at the same time, "In the name of God, Saint Michael, and Saint George, I make thee a knight: be thou brave, hardy, and loyal."

Edmund was then raised from the ground; and the investiture being over, he received the congratulations of the surrounding knights. His helmet, shield, and lance were now delivered to him, and his horse brought, which he mounted, without using the stirrup, and performed several courses, displaying his dexterity in horsemanship, and in the management of his arms. A knight then leaped on his own steed, and couching his spear, engaged in combat with Edmund. For a long time they both displayed the greatest agility, and received the praises of the surrounding knights.

Alighting, Edmund was placed at the head of the table; and received other marks of honour from Sir Hugo de

Montmorency, who presented him with a valuable sword, superbly ornamented. Osberne gazed with delight on the son of his friend, whose mind he endeavoured to enrich with all virtuous knowledge. Thus educated, Edmund learned early that sentiment of bravery in the cause of the distressed; that amiable disinterestedness and refined delicacy of conduct which exalts human virtue into heroism.

The features of Edmund now began to assume a manly appearance. He was tall, elegantly formed, the graces of his mind were equal to those of his body, and he became the admiration of his brother knights. The thought of his mother was, however, still present to his mind; and he now pressed the friendly Osberne for leave to depart to seek after her, and to require his estates from Sir Orlando.

Osberne, however, requested him to prolong his stay for some months; to

which with reluctance he consented. "You know," said Osberne, with a sigh, "how much I am interested for you. You are now fast verging into manhood; a year will add strength to your limbs, and you will, I trust, be able to cope with any adversary. I shall then see you depart without fear for your safety; and shall in some small degree have made a return for the friendship I owe your father." A deep sigh accompanied these words; and he turned about to conceal the emotions of his heart.

"Generous St. Clair!" said he, musing; "thou haply dost behold thy offspring under my charge. Let my care of him be some return for the sacrifice thou wouldst have made me in the beauteous Agnes. Never, alas! can I drive her from my distracted memory. 'Tis some consolation that I had power to act as I did. Thou wert made happy, and I for ever miserable!"

Edmund was struck with these words,

which it appeared were inadvertently uttered by Osberne, who did not seem to be conscious at the moment of what he was doing. He had mentioned the name of his mother; and he became anxious to know what it was which had so greatly embittered the life of his patron, and in which it appeared his family were deeply concerned. He could not, however, bring himself to make the enquiry, from a fear that his curiosity might be displeasing to his friend.

Edmund took great pleasure in the society of the knights, and in hearing them relate the brave actions of their lives, and the stately tournaments at which they had come off conquerors. He burnt with desire to try his skill in arms, and resolved to go to the first tournament which should be given; he imparted this resolution to Osberne, who commended him for it; and Edmund, not wishing to be known, had prepared for him a suit of armour of black steel, and

a shield, the device of which was a black cloud, with a sun-beam endeavouring to force through it: intimating thereby the gloom which obscured the sun of his affections, his beloved mother; and by the ray he wished to infer that hope still existed.

Thus equipped, he waited impatiently in hopes of hearing of some tournament; but he was disappointed in that desire: the only one which was talked of, was to be given at the coronation of the young prince, when he should attain the proper age.

Edmund observed with the greatest regret the increasing ill state of Osberne's health. The rose had faded from his cheek; every day he grew more dejected and melancholy: he no longer rode out with the knights; and when with Edmund, he sometimes would be for hours without speaking to him.

Edmund endeavoured to draw his mind from the continual harassing

thoughts which seemed to oppress him; but found his efforts useless—Osberne seemed fast verging into the grave. Frequently in the dead of night he would leave his restless couch, and take a melancholy walk in the gloomy forest. On these occasions Edmund would follow him, and by conversation wean his mind from the melancholy the oppressed it; and then persuade him to return to the cottage.

Osborne was sensible of the attentions of Edmund, and would endeavour at times to appear composed, and to converse with his usual cheerfulness, when he would suddenly stop, and fall into a fit of musing.

One evening, when Osberne was lying on his couch, he took the hand of Edmund, who was sitting by his side; "My dear Edmund," said he, "I feel the spark that animates my frame, begins to grow dim. I shall die happy," said he, "because I have had it in my

power to be of service to the son of my friend."

Edmund could not conceal the sorrow that bedewed his cheeks. "Oh, my second father," said he, "live, I beseech you; consider, should I lose you, I have no other friend to fly to; you give way to some secret melancholy, which is hourly sapping the foundation of your existence. Do but endeavour to banish that, and you will doubtless recover."

"It is too late," said Osberne, "with a sigh, "the grim king of terrors has marked me for his prey; reach me that sword which hangs below your casque."

Edmund, somewhat surprised, did as he was requested. Osberne surveyed for a while, the sword; he dropped a tear on it. "This sword, Edmund, was your father's gift to me; to you, my friend, I now present it; but you must," said he, "first solemnly swear on it, that when I am no more, you will

burn a packet of papers which you will find at the bottom of that coffer, without examining their contents. They are tied by a silken cord, and the roll of papers which you will see by the side of them, is the hapless detail of my sorrows. In that coffer you will also find a casket of valuable jewels, which I bequeath to you. And now, my friend, I have one more request to make, and that is," added he, with a solemn voice, " that the small case, which is in it you will take out, and unseen by any one, lay it in the coffin by my side, without opening it."

Edmund, with a deep sigh, promised to perform the wishes of Osberne, and solemnly swore, on his father's sword, not to attempt to open or read the papers, or look within the case.

When he had thus done, Osberne appeared more composed, and Edmund began to have hopes that he should not have to perform the painful task he had

so solemnly promised to do; but it was but an uncertain flash of light, which the expiring taper cast around. The source of life was near its ebb, and in a few days Edmund was obliged to resign the fairest hope which he had hitherto cherished.

" Farewell, my beloved Edmund, pursue now the path of glory, which lies before you; the sword of St. Clair will ever be victorious. May you meet, if not on earth, in the blissful regions above, your angelic mother. Think some times on Osberne; and when you have perused my narrative, destroy it. Adieu once more. May you ever be happy."

Wearied nature was now overpowered by the quick advance of dissolution. The last words faltered on the pale lips of Osberne; he looked at Edmund, faintly pressed his hand, and endeavoured to smile, but a convulsive gasp seized him, and he sunk into the

cold embrace of death. Edmund for a long time, in speechless sorrow, hung over the body of his friend, from which he was at length removed by the gentle entreaties of the knights.

CHAP. XLII.

The death of Osberne was greatly regretted by the knights, for he was much beloved by them, and they prepared the funeral solemnities with sorrowful hearts. Edmund, mindful of his promise, the night before the interment of the lifeless form, contrived, unobserved, to enter the cabin were it lay.

Osberne's attendant was sitting sorrowfully near the door, lamenting the loss of his beloved master. Edmund begged he would depart from the chamber, and remain near the cottage to prevent any one entering, as he wished to take his final leave of his kind friend ere he was shut for ever from his sight, in the cold jaws of the grave.

The domestic now departed, and Edmund fastening the door to prevent in-

trusion, took up the lamp, and drew away the lid of the coffin, in which lay the once friendly Osberne, now pale and motionless. Those eyes that used to survey the beauties of nature were closed; those lips that gave utterance to the pleasing voice of friendship, dumb for ever! the warm tear of affection dropped from the eyes of Edmund, as he surveyed the lifeless corpse, and he continued for a long time indulging his griefs, till at length he reflected that he might be interrupted ere he could perform his promise.

He then advanced to the coffin, and feeling for the casket, he opened it, and took from thence a small case. The solemn promise he made to Osberne, made him fearful of even looking on the outside; and that it might not be observed, he laid it beneath his body.

The casket he returned, from a motive of delicacy, lest it might be supposed he entered the cottage with an idea of securing it. He then quitted

the cottage, and was going away; but fearful lest by any accident the case might be observed, entered the chamber, where he determined to remain the whole night. He again opened the coffer, and took out the packet, and the roll of paper, which he covered up in his mantle, and taking it to the cabin he had inhabited, he cast the packet into the fire; the flames soon consumed it, and Edmund having secured the narrative, returned again to the cottage where Osberne lay, satisfied that he had faithfully performed his promise; he now beheld the lid of the coffin fastened.

Father Oswald now entered, and four of the knights bearing the bier, proceeded to the chapel. The scene was awfully solemn; the chapel was lit by torches, and hung with black; the deep-toned voice of the father reading the service, interrupted the silence. Edmund, with his arms folded, stood gazing on the coffin, till the knights,

assisting in the solemn dirge, made him start from his reverie.

They now took the coffin, and lowered it into the grave ; deep sobs were heard from every knight, who covering their faces with their black mantles, remained bending over the grave, indulging their grief; at length the sound of the earth as it rattled on the lid of the coffin, interrupted the silence.

Edmund clasped his hands together ; " Oh, my friend, adieu ! deeply shall I ever regret thy loss ; long shall I revere thy memory."

His agitations were so great, that he was unable to utter more ; and one of the knights conducted him from the solemn scene to the cabin, which had been allotted to him from the time he had been made a knight, where they remained to endeavour to comfort him.

As soon as the morning dawned, Hugo de Montmorency entered the cabin.

"My friend," said he to Edmund, "our departed Osberne, a few days before his death, entrusted me with a packet, which he conjured me not to open till he was in his grave. This moment, in compliance to his wishes, I have broke it open, and find it contains his will; every thing he possesses he has left to you."

Edmund could not forbear his tears at this instance of the kindness of his friend, who had thus generously provided for his present wants. He now determined to proceed to the chateau de St. Clair, in hopes of hearing news of his mother from Mortimer de Veseri, who he knew was his friend; he therefore took only the casket of jewels, and his father's sword, and divided the remainder of Osberne's property amongst the knights.

In the agitation of his mind, he had forgot the narrative which Osberne had directed him to peruse. But while he was reflecting on the mysterious words

and conduct of Osberne, it suddenly occurred to him, that those papers would probably explain to him the reason; and taking them up, he read as follows:

"In vain do I seek repose. In vain do I wander amidst the soothing shades of this forest, or in society endeavour to forget my grief. Agnes, my beloved, my adored Agnes! thy sweet form is ever present to me. Never will it depart from my imagination, it is deeply engraven on my heart. Oh, St. Clair, thou hast indeed a treasure! that thou —but soft, what was I going to say? —Generous, best of men, thou, thou alone dost deserve the blessing.—Agnes couldst thou see my sorrows; didst thou know what I feel, but for a moment, how it would grieve thee.—But why do I wish to cause thee that moment's uneasiness?—perish the barbarous thought!—

"When I see the sun rising in majestic splendour; when his bright beams

pierce through the umbrageous shades of the forest; I think another day of misery is come; and when the misty shades of evening condenses into a deep gloom, or the moon sheds her silver beams over the silent face of nature, it brings to my mind the sleepless agitated night I am doomed to suffer.

" Before I beheld Agnes de Courcy, I knew not what it was to love. Her I adored, idolized to distraction.—Do I not now?—Alas, my sighs, my tears, my plaintive groans! When at midnight, or in some gloomy recess of the forest, I can indulge freely, my sorrows too plainly tell the force of the passion that is fast hurrying me to the grave.

" My mind was once as the rivulet that gently steals over its sandy bottom; but now it is like the foaming ocean that overwhelms the craggy shores, that endeavour to resist its force.

Agnes de Courcy I loved with gentle earnestness—I pleaded the soft emotion which I felt—sighed for a return! she

blushed; it was the blush of innocence; it was the delicate suffusion of modesty. 'Osberne,' said she, 'I cannot answer your question. I know not how. I will not give you pain by a refusal. You have not consulted my father. It is then of little import to direct the language of love to my ears, which must remain deaf to any solicitation till his consent is obtained.'

"By this delicate answer, I trusted I was not disagreeable to her; but the task I had to perform of soliciting the consent of the Baron de Courcy to my addresses to his daughter, filled me with a thousand horrible dreads and fears.

"It was a long time before I could summon resolution: at last I put the fatal question, and I was refused.—Horror! distraction! ten thousand furies seized my mind for many days. I roved about the woods which were on the domains of the baron, neglectful of food or rest.

"To increase my horror, I heard

that the Baron de St. Clair was an admirer of the angelic Agnes. Who could see her without adoring her? In a transport of rage, I vowed to destroy him. Agnes heard of my intent, and forgetful for a moment of every thing but esteem for me, she conjured me not to sink myself so low in her opinion, by such an attempt. I answered her letter in all the bitterness of woe. I painted to her my sufferings. She conjured me to endeavour to compose my agitated mind. Her letters grew kind, and I began to have a gleam of hope dawn in my breast that I might possess the angelic fair.

"One morning I met her in the forest, I threw myself on my knees before her, I represented the violence of my adoration; tears came from my eyes, they brought from the gentle Agnes an exclamation of pity; and at last by gentle force, I drew from her, that she had an esteem for me; that she pitied my suf-

ferings, but that she must remember she was a daughter.

" I retired more composed after she had promised to see me again. I hoped to be able to induce her to consent to a private marriage. The next time we met, I plainly saw she had been in tears. ' You have been weeping, my adored Agnes,' said I: ' who, or what has interrupted the sweet repose your innocent mind enjoys?' Agnes replied not. I pressed her to let me know the cause of her distress; and at length she said, ' This is the last time you will see me, Osberne. My father has commanded me to receive the addresses of the Baron de St. Clair.'

" At that my countenance changed, rage and jealousy convulsed my frame. I saw myself on the point of losing whatever made life sweet or desirable. A sudden thought struck me by which I might avoid the evil; and as I reflected on it, my agitated mind became more composed.

Agnes saw the revolution that had taken place in me. She felt alarmed at it. ‘ Osborne,’ said she, in a solemn tone, ‘ what is it you are thinking on ?’

“ ‘ On the misery of my situation, my adored Agnes,’ said I, endeavouring to appear less at ease. ‘ Can I see you on the point of being lost to me for ever—you whom I so tenderly love, so greatly adore—without experiencing the most agonizing sensations ? And can you, will you, sacrifice yourself to the will of your father ? Will you, to please his ambitious views, doom your future existence to misery ?’

“ ‘ Alas!’ said Agnes, ‘ what can I do ?—The Baron de St. Clair’—

“ ‘ Name him not !’ said I, in a distracted voice. ‘ He is the curse of my existence ! ’Tis he who has nipped the bud of my hopes !’

“ We were now forced to part. The form of the Baron de Courcy was seen descending the marble stairs that led up to the portal of the hall of his castle.

I darted precipitately into the gloomy forest, and throwing myself on the green bank of a stream, gave loose to the agony of my heart.

"While I was thus indulging my sorrows, I beheld the Baron de St. Clair in the forest. At the sight of him I became outrageous. My blood boiled in my veins. 'I will now,' said I, 'put my design in execution.' Starting up, I rushed forwards to meet him. I drew my sword. 'Prepare,' said I, 'to defend thyself! one of us must fall.'

"'Good Heavens!' said the baron; 'do not I behold Osberne? What is the reason of this conduct?'

"'I have no time for parley,' said I. 'Draw, or I may be forced to murder you in my rage.'

"Seeing I was determined, St. Clair defended himself from my assault. I endeavoured to destroy him, that I might do away the possibility of his possessing the lovely Agnes. He was cool and collected; I trembled in every limb

with the agitation of my mind. In vain I exerted myself in the combat: he skilfully parried my thrusts. But at length, seeing me resolved to destroy him, if I could, he wounded me. A torrent of blood came from me—I fell. 'Complete,' said I, 'what you have begun—in mercy kill me.'

"'Osberne,' said St. Clair, 'I was unfortunately obliged to act as I did in my own defence. Tell me now, for Heaven's sake, what it was that has urged you to seek my life?'

"'Agnes!'—I exclaimed, faint with the loss of blood.

"'Is it possible! And do you love Agnes?'

"'More than my existence!' said I. 'Oh, St. Clair, kill me, I intreat you! I wish not to live—life is an odious burthen!—Oh, Agnes! my adored Agnes!' said I, seizing my sword, 'adieu for ever!' I then directed its point against my breast, but St. Clair prevented me. He raised me from the ground, bound

up the wound, and taking my sword from me, hasted to a cottage to procure assistance.

" Meanwhile I lay groaning with the agony of my mind and my wound. ' Agnes,' said I ; ' my sweet Agnes, adieu for ever ! No more will my eyes be delighted with thy beauties : no more will my ears be charmed with the silver cadences of thy voice.'

" While I was thus lamenting my miseries, Agnes herself hearing my voice, came up. When she beheld my ensanguined body, she uttered a violent shriek. ' Osberne !' she exclaimed : ' What is it you have been doing ? Alas ! I feared this.' ' Agnes,' said I, ' you are come to receive my last sighs. I cannot live without you !' ' Oh, Osberne, for Heaven's sake, speak not so ! Alas ! you know not how you afflict me.' Tears came from her lovely eyes : she leant over me ; I took her hand, and imprinted a fervent kiss on it.

" At this moment St. Clair returned.

He was pale, and seemed greatly agitated. He had seen the distress of Agnes; had observed her tears, and me kissing her hand.

" ' Live, Osberne,' said he, in a trembling voice; ' to you I resign Agnes!'

" His words struck like lightning on my soul. I looked up to thank him; but he was gone. The dark shades of the forest hid him from my sight. ' Agnes, my adored Agnes,' said I, enraptured, ' did you hear that generous St. Clair? I have nothing then to fear from thee.' Agnes said little; but I could see the resignation of St. Clair pleased her.

" The peasants were now approaching whom St. Clair had called to my assistance. Agnes hasted away, and I was carried to a cottage. How did I bless my wound, which had been the means of conveying such blissful hopes to my bosom! As soon as I was able to sit up, I wrote the following lines to Agnes:

" ' Agnes, my adored Agnes!—The

'sighs, the laments of thy adoring Os-
'berne, dissolve in the wide ærial space
'ere they reach thee! In vain I call on
'thy name; in vain do I hope for thy
'presence, to ease the anguish I endure.
'Where art thou, dear soul of my exist-
'ence? What meadow, what grove is
'blessed with thy presence? Thou
'knowest, oh, delight of my heart! that
'without thee I am miserable. Bless
'then, my humble abode with thy en-
'chanting society. It will ease my pain;
'it will heal the wound, which has been
'the happy means of producing the
'pleasing hopes which fill my breast.
'See then, I entreat you, your adoring
'Osberne!'

"This letter I entrusted to the peasant, at whose cottage I resided, who undertook to convey it privately to Agnes. I saw him depart, and impatiently numbered the moments till his return. I anxiously gazed on his countenance when he entered; 'The lady,' said he, 'is coming to see you. I met

her in the forest, near where we found you lying, and delivered to her your letter.'

"How my heart beat with delight at this sweet intelligence; how quick were its pulsations when I heard her soft steps at the door.—'My adored Agnes,' was all I could utter: when I saw her, my heart swelled, my eyes were suffused in tears, and my lips were unable to express what was passing in my mind. She gave me her hand; I embraced it, I watered it with my tears, I pressed it to my heart; a pearly drop stole down her beauteous cheek, and in a faltering voice she enquired after my health.

"'No pain can I feel while with you my sweet Agnes,' I at length replied; 'joy, health, and bliss attends your presence.'

"Agnes now asked me, if I had seen St. Clair; 'No,' I replied. 'My father,' said she, 'is greatly astonished as his conduct in so suddenly absenting himself without a cause.'

" ' Generous St. Clair, he has, it is likely, returned to his chateau since he resigned you to me;' Agnes blushed; ' complete,' said I, ' his exalted generosity, by confirming my happiness.'

" Agnes seemed overwhelmed with the most painful emotions, and unable to support herself, sunk on a chair: I knelt before her: I entreated her to consent to a union.

" ' Without my father's consent, Osberne,' she at length said; ' I dare not; I cannot be guilty of such a glaring act of disobedience, which would call down on me his curse.' She looked at the casement: the shady curtain of night began to unfold itself over the horizon, and she hastily bid me adieu, and departed.

" My wound was now rapidly healing, and my mind became more composed. I laid down on my humble pallet, and soon fell into a deep slumber. A noise in my room awoke me in the night; I beheld a form standing by my bed-side,

a stream of moon-light fell on the countenance; the eyes were hollow, the cheeks pallid and sunk. Good God! what were my emotions, when I recognized in the emaciated form before me, the generous St. Clair.

"I thought it was his spectre: I trembled; but lay still gazing on the melancholy form, while a hollow voice said, 'Thou canst sleep, thou art happy; and soon I trust will be the hapless St. Clair.' With a deep sigh, the form slowly moved out of the room; and I remained on my couch, ruminating on what I had heard and seen.

"When the morning came, I arose and walked in the forest for the first time since I had been wounded; when, turning into an unfrequented path, I saw St. Clair slowly advancing towards me.

"I started; it was the same melancholy form I had seen in the night. I was deeply affected; I ran up to him and embraced his emaciated frame

'Leave me,' said he, in a low voice, 'leave me, Osberne, leave to die a miserable wretch.'

"'Oh, my friend!' said I, 'can I leave you thus; tell me what is it that has caused this change.?'

"'Forbear your questions,' said St. Clair; 'and if you would shew your gratitude for my conduct to you, leave me.'

"Absorbed in melancholy, I slowly withdrew; St. Clair continued his walk, supporting his feeble steps with a staff. Unable, at length, to stand, he rested himself on a fallen tree; I drew towards him, concealing myself by the underwood; when I heard him say, 'Agnes, lovely Agnes, would I could forget thee; but only in the grave, shall thy form be rooted from my remembrance. 'Osberne, how happy thou wilt be!'

"Here, overcome with the agony of his mind, he fell senseless over the tree. I rushed forward to him; I lifted him up, cold drops of water stood on his

face; I felt his pulse, no motion was perceptible; and I thought that my friend was no more.

" While I held him in my arms, looking anxiously on his countenance, he slowly opened his eyes; they were fixed on me, he frowned. ' Leave me,' he faintly articulated; ' leave to die a wretch.' ' No, St. Clair,' I exclaimed, ' I am not so barbarous. Leave you! No, never leave you thus. O God? how you tremble: St. Clair, you shall live, you shall be happy. I cannot equal you in generosity: I will endeavour to imitate your example. Meet me on that spot where I fell beneath your sword, this evening at sun-set; promise me that,' said I, in a solemn voice, ' or else I will not leave you till then.'

" St. Clair faintly acquiesced, and I supported him to a cottage. He pointed out where he had passed his miserable hours, since he had given up all hopes of obtaining Agnes.

" I left him there, and full of my re-

solution, I went to the cabin, where I had resided since I had received my wound. I then hastily wrote to Agnes; 'Meet me,' said I, 'Oh, too lovely Agnes! at that spot where you last saw St. Clair; where he acted so generous, so exalted a part: 'tis the last request of Osberne.'

"When I sent it, Heavens! what were my emotions; it required all my philosophy, all my powers to support me. I was constantly obliged to bring to my remembrance the pale dying St. Clair, dying for the treasure he had resigned to me. I looked at the sun, how did I wish to see his declining rays: I was fearful I should not have sufficient resolution to perform my intended part. Oh! what a fever of agony burnt up my tottered frame.

"Long before the time appointed, I repaired to the place, where, in a chaos of soul-harrowing thoughts, I passed the time. Looking up, I beheld at a distance, the sweet form of Agnes ap-

proaching. Oh God! how did my heart swell with agony; I hid my face, fearful that my resolutions would fail, by the sensations which arose in my breast; at the sight of her I was convulsed with grief.

"She touched my arm, 'Good Heavens! Osberne, what is the matter?' How shall I describe what I felt! I dropped my mantle from my face, beheld her lovely charms, and found all my resolves fading away; when I saw St. Clair approaching the place with trembling steps.

"The sight of that best of men on the brink of the grave, a willing sacrifice to his generosity, made me resolute. 'Agnes,' said I, 'dear, ever adored Agnes, you behold me for the last time. St. Clair,' said I, taking his hand, and joining it with that of Agnes, 'live, be happy; you alone are worthy of the inestimable treasure I resign to you. Think, oh think sometimes of Osberne!'

saying this, I abruptly quitted them, and rushed swiftly into the gloomy recesses of the forest, not once daring to look behind me.

" I scarcely knew what I did; for some time my mind was such a chaos of confusion. I however, at length, came to a full recollection of the past; I found myself in the cottage of the peasant, who had attended me when I was wounded. I instantly recalled to my mind, of my having seen Agnes there, and I rushed out of the place. I travelled some time, till at last I bethought myself of the Knights of the Forest. 'With them,' thought I, 'will I pass the remainder of my days, and luckily in some fierce encounter I may end my hapless life.'

" With this idea, I took the oaths of celibacy, and thus bid adieu to the hope of possessing Agnes, for ever.

" Some time after, we took the field; I was pleased at it, and hoped to end

my miserable existence. The first day I arrived at the camp, I saw the Baron de St. Clair; he instantly flew into my arms. My sensations at that moment, precluded the power of speech; the wounds of my heart were all opening afresh. 'My dearest friend," said St. Clair, 'how happy I am again to see you. How long I have sought after you, to thank you for the inestimable blessing you resigned to me.'

" 'Agnes,' said I, 'then is—'

" I could not bring my tongue to utter the rest; I turned round, to conceal my emotions. St. Clair observed it; he sighed deeply, and endeavoured to change the discourse. He begged me to come to his tent, where he intreated my acceptance of a costly sword. 'Wear it, dear Osberne, for my sake; my friendship for you, ends but with my life.'

" Alas! it was but of short duration, in the first engagement he was slain

in the heat of it. I had nearly fallen over his body, and my sword almost dropped from my hand. I instantly ordered his remains to be conveyed to his tent, and after the battle, had it taken to his chateau. I then bethought myself of Agnes; but for my vow, I might have declared myself once more her suitor: I might have called that bright jewel mine. Overwhelmed with grief, for my oath was irrevocable, I rushed into the thickest of the battle; I courted death from every hand, but in vain; no friendly wound was given, to separate the thread of my hapless existence; and I returned from the ensanguined plain, unhurt.

"My melancholy is insurmountable; it is fast sapping the foundation of my existence. A few short months, and happily I shall rest in my grave. Till then, Agnes, thy form will ever be present to my imagination.

"To alleviate my grief, I sometimes

read the dear letters of her I adored. View her dear similitude, which I traced from the lovely original. But these indulgences only serve to increase the melancholy which is bringing my existence to a close. To the grave only, I look for quiet repose."

CHAP. XLIII.

EDMUND, with heartfelt grief, perused the melancholy tale of the hapless Osberne, which so well accounted for his agitations. He committed the narrative, agreeable to his desire, to the flames; and the next morning, he took an affectionate leave of the friendly knights, and clad in sable armou , rode off to seek tidings of his mother, and to demand reparation from Sir Orlando, for his treatment of her; now, that through the care of Osberne, he was enabled to do.

He emerged from the dark shades of the forest, and rested himself at the vine-dresser's cottage, where he staid that night; and early the next morning he set out, and arrived towards the

evening, at the village which was near the chateau de St. Clair.

In order to avoid being recognized, he wore his visor down, and entering a cottage, requested an assylum for the night. The peasant, to whom he made the application, readily granted it; but, at the same time observed, that if he would go to the chateau, he would be far better accomodated there, than in his poor cottage: adding, that no person, but the steward and a few domestics, now inhabited it.

"What," said Edmund, "is then become of Sir Orlando de Vortimer, who used to reside there?"

"He has been gone a long time," replied the peasant.

"Gone!" exclaimed Edmund, "Where is he gone?"

"I believe, to England: there were strange tales about it; but it is not my business to meddle with the affairs of my lord."

"What tales were they, my friend?"

said Edmund; "you need not fear relating them to me; and I will reward your trouble."

"Why," said the man, in a low voice, "it was said, that the ghost of the Baron de St. Clair, used to torment him, because he ill used his lady, who was married to Sir Orlando. And he was obliged to leave the fine chateau: and he sold all the estates of the lady, after she died."

Edmund groaned.

"What is the matter," said the peasant; "are you not well?"

Edmund answered not, but hung his head, oppressed with deep melancholy, at the mention of his mother.

"Perhaps you knew the lady," said the peasant.

Edmund hastily left the cottage, and for some time indulged his melancholy unseen.—He felt himself unable, in his present state, to visit the chateau. When, therefore, he had in some measure, composed the violence of his grief,

he again entered the cottage, and partaking of a slight refreshment, for a short time, reposed himself on the hard, but clean pallet, the peasant's cottage afforded.

Early the next morning, he mounted his horse, and rode towards Rennes, where, he had heard on the road, there was to be a tournament given in honour of the coronation of the young king, which was to take place in two days.

His soul was inspired by a hope of gaining laurels in the combat, and of proving how well he had profited by the instructions of his beloved Osberne. With impatience, therefore, he hasted to the city, and arrived there late in the evening which preceded the morning of the tournament. He was, therefore, too late to partake of the toils of the first day. As it was necessary his shield should be suspended in the grand hall of the palace, one day previous to his being permitted to enter the lists.

Early the next morning, with his

visor down, he entered the hall, having on his arm, his shield. His helmet was adorned with a large plume of sable feathers; a sable surcoat was thrown over his shoulders, and by his side, was suspended the sword of the Baron de St. Clair.

The singularity of his device, attracted the attention of the knights, as also the circumstance of his wearing his visor down.

The cheerful blasts of the trumpets now echoed through the hall; hastily the knights took down their shields, which had been suspended against the columns in the hall, and repaired to the place appointed for the lists. Edmund, after he had hung up his shield in the hall, followed them as a spectator to the amphitheatre, which was erected for the celebration of the tournament.

Pillars of marble supported the galleries which were raised for the accommodation of the spectators. The young king sat on a magnificent throne erected

in the gallery, which was made so low that the knights might receive their rewards from the hands of the ladies; and the barriers were adorned with the standards of the knights who were to contend for the prizes.

The ladies, superbly dressed, were placed in the front row of the galleries; their hair richly adorned with braids of pearls and other costly jewels.

The knights were conducted into the lists by the young ladies of the court, and their steeds, richly caparisoned, were led in after them by their pages, followed by their shield-bearers.

The judges of the lists having made the customary examinations, retired to their seats, and the trumpets gave the signal that all was ready for the competitors to engage for the honour of the day.

The herald of the knight who was first in the lists, advanced to give the challenge to another; which was readily accepted. Edmund watched with plea-

sure the dexterity of the combatants; and at length the knight who had been challenged, was unhorsed and greatly hurt. The moment he was on the ground, the knight leaped from his horse, and tore from the arm of his opponent a bracelet, which he instantly bound round his own; and then with a triumphant air mounted his steed, and waited, as was customary with the victor, a challenge from some of the knights who had not engaged.

The vanquished knight now arose, and with a slow pace, supported by his page, quitted the lists. Few were the plaudits bestowed on the conqueror, who comported himself in so discourteous a manner to the knight he had conquered, and who it was plain was his rival in the affections of some fair dame.

A pause now ensued, when the trumpet sounded, and one of the knights spurring his horse, advanced to meet the conqueror. Every one secretly

wished him to defeat the discourteous knight, who accepted the challenge with a proud demeanor; and they ran the career with all the fury of inveterate foes.

For a long time the combat hung in doubtful balance; till at length the haughty knight, after many stratagems, which shewed him to be a master in the warlike exercise, drove his lance with such force against the breast of his antagonist, that it entered the messes of his hauberk; and notwithstanding the thick quilting of the gambeson, it tore his body.

The knight dropped from his steed; a torrent of blood issued from the wound: all was confusion. The screams of the ladies, who were affrighted at the sanguine stream, rent the air. The pages instantly ran up, and carried the wounded knight off the ground.

The king, touched with concern at the accident, suspended the tournament for that day; and the conquering knight

rode up to receive the prize, which was a surcoat of white silk, richly embroidered with gold. With a haughty air he wound it round his arm, and making his obeisance to the king, rode off.

Edmund now waited anxiously for the next day. He had noticed with contempt the discourteous manner of the knight, and burned to engage with him. He requested one of the knights who was standing near him, to acquaint him with his name; who instantly informed him that he was called Raymond de Gondibert; and that he was nephew to the late regent.

"Was it not strange," said Edmund, "that he should tear the bracelet from the arm of the knight he first overthrew?"

"I can with pleasure inform you of the reason," replied the courteous knight. "He who wore the bracelet was the admirer of a young lady of the court, who returned his love. The haughty Raymond became also ena

moured of the fair, who rejected his suit; and it was in order to revenge himself on his rival that he treated him so indignantly before his mistress, who instantly swooned at the sight, and was carried out of the gallery.

Edmund thanked the intelligent knight, and leaving the amphitheatre, went to the place where he had fixed his abode in the city, instead of attending the magnificent banquet which was given to the knights; as he would in that case have been obliged to raise his visor, and he wished to remain in obscurity until he had obtained satisfaction of Sir Orlando for his wrongs.

The next morning at length was ushered in by the sound of the merry trumpets; and Edmund with a beating heart arose, and putting on his sable armour, went to the grand hall. His shield remained untouched; and when the signal was given, he took it down, and proceeded to the barriers.

In his turn a beauteous lady came and

led him into the lists. Edmund was struck with his lovely conductress, to whom he made a profound obeisance; and when she had performed her task, gallantly attended her to her seat in the gallery.

A page, whom he had hired for the purpose, now brought in his horse; and a shield-bearer attended with the shield, bearing the device of the black cloud.

The eyes of the numerous concourse of spectators were fixed on Edmund. Whispers of enquiry ran round the galleries; but no one knew him. The knight, who was called Raymond de Gondibert, stood as victor at the head of the lists. Edmund was in great hopes, that he would have received a challenge from him. In that, however, he was disappointed: a knight who was by his side was the person Gondibert fixed on; and the combat now began. Fortune as usual attended him; and in the second course the knight was unhorsed.

Edmund was now spurring on his horse; but another knight had got the start of him, and he immediately reined back his steed. This knight was too eager to begin the attack, and in the first onset was thrown off his saddle.

Edmund now advanced. Gondibert surveyed him with contempt. "Who art thou?" said he; "till now I never saw thy device."

"That question," said Edmund firmly, "may be hereafter demanded, when I have more leisure to answer it."

"Prepare then for thy defeat," said Gondibert, "as a reward for thy evasive reply."

Edmund, justly irritated at this, couched his lance and commenced the combat. A profound silence was observed. Every one surveyed the encounter with the greatest anxiety. Edmund particularly distinguished himself, engaging the admiration of all the beholders; and Raymond found that he had to engage with a skilful antagonist.

He grew outrageous, and drove so furiously at Edmund, that his lance was shivered in pieces. Edmund scorned to take advantage of this circumstance, but waited till another lance was brought to Gondibert; who having received one from his armour-bearer, renewed the combat.

The fickle goddess at length declared for Edmund, who with the greatest dexterity unhorsed his proud adversary. Innumerable plaudits rent the air; while Edmund instantly dismounted, and lifting up the fallen knight, after having unlaced his helmet, that he might the more freely breathe, generously said, "Repine not, Sir Knight, that fortune has this day assisted me; another day I may fall beneath thy successful arm."

Gondibert, however, disdained an answer, but retired sullenly from the field. Edmund now remounted his horse. No one, however, seemed solicitous to deprive him of the honour he had gained; and when the trumpet had thrice sounded,

he alighted from his steed, and made his obeisance to the king, who marked his approbation of his conduct with a smile.

Edmund then advanced to the lady who had conducted him into the lists, and gracefully bowed to her; then mounting his steed, he rode through the barriers without demanding his prize as victor; his reason for which was, that he must in that case have raised his visor, which was contrary to his resolution.

He now repaired to the house where he had taken up his abode; and unbuckling his armour, reposed himself after the fatigues of the day. "Osberne," thought he, "I have not disgraced the lessons thou hast given me, to thee belongs the glory I have gained; how thy kind heart would rejoice to hear of my success in my first encounter, and again a foe who so richly deserved it.

Edmund now determined to proceed to the chateau de St. Clair, to make

himself known to the faithful Mortimer, from whom he might gain some intelligence respecting his beloved mother. In the evening he walked out of the city of Rennes, and seeking a retired part of a small grove, enjoyed the refreshing cool breeze that came over the western hills.

His thoughts were so intently fixed on his future plans, that the evening was now fast verging to night. Edmund, however, suddenly recollecting the distance he had to return, and his uncertainty of being able to retrace his steps in the dark, turned round, and in that moment beheld, in the gloom before him, three figures, who immediately darted into a shady part of the grove, and were quickly hid from his sight.

Edmund much surprised, and supposing them to be banditti, laid his hand on his sword, walked by the spot where they had disappeared, when rushing forward, they suddenly attacked him.

Edmund, in some measure prepared, defended himself in the most courageous manner, and having luckily wounded the one who appeared to be the principal; the other two instantly fled. Edmund seizing the sword of his adversary, hurled it away among the underwoods, and anxious to know who it was, for he soon perceived that his enemies were not banditti, he unlaced the helmet, which he took off; when, what was his surprise, at beholding the features of Raymond de Gondibert, who, in an agitated voice, said "Complete your work, I wish not to live."

"Thy life," said Edmund, with contempt, "is not worth the taking; live to despise thy own base actions."

Thus saying, scorning to hold further converse with him, he quitted the place, and went to his abode.

It seems that Raymond de Gonbibert, after his defeat, had caused enquiry to be made of the page who attended Edmund, of the name of his

master. Of this circumstance the page was ignorant, and therefore not able to satisfy Gondibert: of his residence he however informed him, and Raymond determined on destroying Edmund, if possible.

For this purpose he watched near the house, attended by two ruffians, where he resided, in hopes he would go out, and when he saw him bending his course towards the grove, he cautiously followed his steps, and there conducted himself, as has been already stated; for which he received the reward due to his base actions, for he was severely wounded.

Edmund the next morning dismissed his page and attendants, and mounting his horse, left the city of Rennes, and directed his course to the chateau de St. Clair, still restless to know his mother's fate, and also to make enquiries concerning his estates, and the present abode of his bitter enemy Sir Orlando de Vortimer, whom he determined to call to a severe account for his conduct.

From Mortimer he might gain some information; and it was most advisable to collect as much as he could, that he might not in future be led into any mistake, or draw his sword in a wrong cause, so greatly had Edmund profited by the sage instructions of his lamented Osberne.

CHAP. XLIV.

MORTIMER DE VESERI had been the favourite domestic of the Baron Henri de St. Clair; he tenderly loved the young Edmund, and from the accounts which he had collected from Sir Gaveston's people, he sincerely hoped that he should one day see him return.

He therefore beheld, with heartfelt sorrow, that the estates which were belonging to him, by right of his father's will, would soon be disposed of by Sir Orlando de Vortimer, to satisfy the demands of sharpers and profligates.

Ofttimes would he, instead of taking his needful rest, sit ruminating by the pale light of the nocturnal lamp, on the means he should pursue to prevent that

injustice to his young lord, whom he besought Heaven, with his eyes suffused in tears, to restore to his rightful inheritance.

When he understood that a marriage was intended between Sir Orlando and the Lady Emillia de Hertford, he determined to endeavour to prevent it, as he had many suspicions that the Lady Agnes de Vortimer was still alive.

From his own chamber he had discovered there was a private passage, but till now it never recurred to him to examine where it led to, and he determined the day before the Baron de Hertford was to attend, to peruse the papers relative to the estate which Sir Orlando pretended to be the rightful possessor of, to see to what part it communicated.

Fastening the door of his apartment, and taking a lamp, he entered the passage, which was narrow, and appeared to be made in the wall of the chateau,

he proceeded some time along the passage, which would barely permit one person to pass along it, till he came to a door, which he opened, and entered a small square apartment.

For what purpose this was made he could form no idea, and he examined carefully the walls to find if there was any concealed door or pannel, for he knew the chateau abounded with secret passages and communications; having sounded the pannels of the wainscoting one of them shook as he struck it, and appeared to be hollow behind, searching narrowly round it, he perceived a spring, on touching which, the pannel ran back, and disclosed a small passage within.

When Mortimer got to the end of this, a part of the place was boarded, and the top seemed to be canvas; he considered this place for some time, but was not be able to discover what it could be intended for. The canvas was

quite loose, and as he pressed against it, it moved; lifting it still higher up, he discovered a frame, and concluded it was a painting, and wishing to see what chamber it was in, he put his lamp into the opening he had made, and found that it was hung in Sir Orlando's sitting room.

Greatly delighted with this circumstance, which would make his schemes easy to be put in practice, he retired, and when he had arrived at his own chamber, passed the night in ruminating on his intended plans.

He thought that any thing which appeared mysterious would have the greatest effect in alarming the minds of the Baron de Hertford and Sir Orlando. Should he be discovered, he well knew that his life would be forfeited; but he determined to risk that rather than Edmund, or the Lady Agnes should be wronged.

He found the next morning, that the

painting, behind which was the recess he had discovered, was a full length portrait of the Baron de St. Clair.

When the Baron de Hertford entered that chamber, to arrange with De Vortimer concerning the dowry which was to be given with his daughter Emillia, and to peruse the titles which he held of the domains attached to the chateau De St. Clair, Mortimer, who was listening to their conversation behind the portrait, unable to contain himself at hearing Sir Orlando utter the falsehood he did, by declaring that the estates of the Baron de St. Clair, which had descended to his wife the Lady Agnes, were, since her death, become his, and knowing at the same time that they were the property of Edmund, he could not contain himself, but in a hollow voice said, " 'TIS FALSE."

From a small aperture he had made in the canvas, he observed with much satisfaction the emotion of Sir Orlando,

and he anxiously awaited for the result; when, however, the disturbance occasioned by the mysterious voice was in some measure appeased, and that the Baron de Hertford had requested Sir Orlando to pursue his discourse, he began to fear that his schemes would prove abortive, and in an agony of rage, when De Vortimer had again asserted his right to the estates, he exclaimed still louder, "'TIS FALSE AS HELL."

When Sir Orlando searched the places round the apartments, he knew that there was little danger of his being discovered, and he waited the event in his secret hiding place. He was delighted to find that his second exclamation had the desired effect, and that Sir Orlando was so much alarmed as to be unable to proceed, and that he had deferred the Baron de Hertford's investigation into the titles of the estates to another day.

When the apartment was cleared,

he watched Sir Orlando, for he felt anxious to know where the papers were concealed, as he determined, if possible, to get them, and keep them for Edmund, or until he had certain proofs of his death.

When De Vortimer, looking at the papers, which were lying on the table, and saying, " These, however, I will secure, nor shall Edmund ever possess them." Mortimer at this, sighed deeply, which Sir Orlando hearing, greatly alarmed, let the papers fall from his trembling hands.

Mortimer was now assured that the tale of Edmund's death was but a fiction, and firmly believed that the reports of the Lady Agnes having been murdered, was also untrue, and invented only by Sir Orlando for his own base purposes; and the absence of father Hildargo, gave him room for a thousand conjectures.

Mortimer saw the terror that pos-

sessed Sir Orlando, and began to hope that he should at length be able to effect his plans. He saw him take up the papers, and convey them into an adjoining chamber, where he supposed they were secreted. Fearful that the events of the morning would not long prevent De Vortimer's purpose, he had recourse to another expedient to terrify him.

He had remarked in the morning that he gazed with some sensations of horror on the portrait of the Baron de St. Clair, behind which he stood, and he determined to make it the vehicle of alarming him.

In the chamber of the Lady Agnes he had found a miniature of Edmund, which had been painted some years back; this he had carefully treasured by him, often gazing at it, while his eyes would fill with tears, the result of the unexampled affection he bore him, and his anxiety respecting his fate.

He contrived to darken the canvas, on which was the portrait of the baron, by setting thin boards before it, except at the eyes, at which place he scraped the canvas till it was very thin, and before each of the eyes he placed a large lamp, which reflecting through the canvas, gave the portrait a horrible appearance.

Fearful, however, that Sir Orlando might not observe it as he passed from the banqueting hall through that apartment to his bed-chamber, he placed on the table a packet, in which he enclosed the portrait of Edmund.

His little plan answered exactly as he wished; the packet on the table engaged the attention of De Vortimer, who set down his lamp, and opening it, looked with surprise at the miniature, and endeavoured to find out who it resembled. At this moment Mortimer, in a hollow voice, said, "'Tis EDMUND;" and Sir Orlando turning to where the mysterious sound proceeded, saw the inflamed

eyes in the portrait, and uttering a dreadful groan, fell senseless on the floor. Mortimer instantly removed his apparatus, and hastily passing through the passage, entered the apartment, where he raised up the insensible form of Sir Orlando, and endeavoured to bring him to life.

He tried to persuade him that what he had seen or heard, was but in idea, and shewed him the portrait, and which was now as usual, to assure him of it.

De Vortimer, however, was too well convinced of the reality of what he had seen, and was obliged to defer the meeting with the baron, in consequence of the agitation of his mind. But Mortimer was greatly troubled, when, on the fourth day, he was summoned to the apartment of Sir Orlando, who delivered to him the papers, in order to carry them to the Baron de Hertford's castle. There he was unable to hinder the examination, and had the mortification to

find that the baron was perfectly satisfied; and that the marriage of the Lady Emillia with Sir Orlando was agreed on.

How to hinder this, for a long while, he deliberated on; for he wished, both to prevent the base intents, which he well knew De Vortimer had in marrying the Lady Emillia, and to save that lady from the misery that awaited her, in a union with him: besides, having his suspicions, that the Lady Agnes was still living.

The day of the marriage was fixed; and day after day passed, without Mortimer being able to settle on any plan. At length, he resolved to disguise himself, and to address the Baron de Hertford. Putting on the garments of a monk, he walked in the wood, near the baron's castle.

Mortimer had, when he delivered the papers to Sir Orlando, on his return from the baron's castle, observed that he carried them into the next chamber to that

in which the Baron de St. Clair's portrait was; and that he closed the door after him. Mortimer, regardless of his own safety, and anxious only for Edmund's property, remained in the apartment; and softly approaching the door, looked through a crack which was in it, and beheld the place where they were deposited. Delighted beyond measure, he left the apartment, and waited impatiently for the night; when he determined, to endeavour to possess himself of them.

At length, he heard the clock of the chateau proclaim the midnight hour, and taking his lamp, he left his chamber. Entering the apartment, he approached the place where he had seen Sir Orlando deposit the papers, which was in the hollow of the timber, that formed the frame of the casement; he was a long time before he discovered the secret spring that opened the door of the place; but at length, having found it,

he conveyed away the whole of the papers which he found in the recess; the door of which he closed, and hastily retired with his treasure, to his apartment.

For a long time he could not fix on any place to hide them in; but at length he determined on putting them into a small box, and to bury them in the vaults beneath the chateau. This, he thought would be the most effectual mode of securing them; and accordingly, he descending to the vaults, and taking a spade, dug a hole in the earth; and having covered them over, and marked the place; greatly delighted at his success, he returned to his chamber unperceived.

When, after having walked some evenings, in his disguise, (as before stated,) he saw the Baron de Hertford. He conducted himself in a mysterious way, and uttered such words to him, as he thought would most probably make

him attend: bidding him, at the same time, ere he married his daughter, to see once more the papers, and the Baron de St. Clair's will.

This he knew De Vortimer would be unable to comply with, and in consequence, hoped that the intended marriage would be stopped. Mortimer took care to be in his secret place, at the meeting between the Baron de Hertford and Sir Orlando, and beheld every thing succeed as he could wish; and in the moment when De Vortimer was agitated and unable to reply to the baron's request, concerning the will of St. Clair, he said, in his usual hollow tone, "MARK."

This had the desired effect. Orlando, after uttering some incoherent sentences, fell on the floor; and the Baron de Hertford retired.

From the distracted ravings of Sir Orlando, he was well assured that the Lady Agnes was still living, and that she was somewhere confined; and he was

greatly pleased to find, that the Baron de Hertford had withdrawn his consent to the marriage.

When, however, he found some time after, that Sir Orlando was endeavouring to persuade the Lady Emillia to meet him in the castle gardens, which conversation he overheard by accident: he determined to be present. Muffling himself up in the garments of a monk, he left the chateau, and proceeded to the grotto, near which they were to meet. Unobserved, he took his station in it; and when Sir Orlando was standing near it, he made a rustling noise, on purpose to alarm him: Orlando started; and in that instant, the Lady Emillia, who was advancing towards the place, called on him.

In the distraction of his mind, he thought it was Agnes: and while in that state, uttered some incoherent sentences.

Mortimer listened to the persuasions

of Sir Orlando, for the Lady Emillia to consent to a private union; and when at length he found that he was successful, and that Emillia had consented to an immediate marriage, he uttered a deep sigh, and not without some fears, slowly emerged from the grotto, before their eyes; he soon perceived that their alarms would not allow them to follow him, and when he had got out of their sight, he hastened with all possible speed to the chateau, and regardless of the great danger he exposed himself to, determined to put on a suit of armour that had belonged to the Baron de St. Clair.

Thus attired, he concealed himself behind the Baron de St. Clair's monument; and at the moment, when the ceremony was going to commence, he made a clanking noise with his gauntlet against the steel buckler, and then, with a solemn pace, advanced to the altar, and extending his right arm, commanded

them to forbear; trusting in the general confusion, which he knew his strange appearance would occasion, to allow him to escape.

When the chapel was left in total darkness, he hastily disencumbered himself of his armour, and taking up the insensible form of the Lady Emillia, carried her out of the chapel, and setting her on a horse he had provided for the purpose of his own escape, should it be necessary, swiftly galloped towards the baron's castle, and in a few minutes laid her in the hall ere she had recovered from her dreadful fright. He then waited till she should revive; and giving her some admonition, while he concealed himself from her sight, he left the hall, and proceeded to the chateau. Entering the chapel, which he found empty, and from which he gained his chamber; where, greatly fatigued with his exertions, which were too much for

his years, he laid down, and soon fell into a deep slumber.

When Sir Orlando, thus disappointed in all his plans, and having no further means of remaining at the chateau, sent for Mortimer to acquaint him of his intentions of going to Manstow castle, to reside with his brother, Sir Willoughby de Vortimer; the faithful steward could scarcely conceal his delight; and by that he was prevented farther fears respecting the safety of Edmund, lest he should fall into the power of Sir Orlando on his return to the chateau; which he concluded he would do, should he escape from the hands of the banditti he was supposed to be with.

Some months now elapsed; and one afternoon he was greatly astonished to see the monk Hildargo enter the chateau. He passed some time in reflecting what the monk could want there; and as he looked upon him as the cause of the misfortunes that had occurred to

the Lady Agnes and Edmund, he determined on watching his steps.

A sudden thought struck him, that he was going to search for the papers; and he resolved to alarm him in such a manner as should cause him to desist, and he hoped, to leave the chateau; for he looked on the monk as the vile agent of Sir Orlando. He therefore prepared his apparatus with the baron's portrait, and concealing himself behind a column in the hall, he waited to see if the monk would leave his chamber in the night; and when he saw the monk descending the stairs, he hastily left the place he was in, and gaining his own chamber, soon took his station behind the baron's portrait, and illumined the eyes as before.

When he found that the monk did not leave the chamber, as he had hoped he would, on seeing the enflamed eyes in the portrait, he withdrew the light, lest his plans might be found out; and

when he saw that the monk was approaching it, rather alarmed, he contrived to loosen the helmet of the baron, which was hung over his portrait, and which falling from the wall, rolled close to the monk's feet, who greatly frightened, left the apartment, while Mortimer smiled to see the effect of his schemes.

From the behaviour of the monk, he had every reason to suppose that he would pay a second visit to the chambers, and he now determined on another way of alarming him. He again attired himself in the Baron de St. Clair's armour, and putting on the helmet which had hung over the portrait, he concealed himself in a closet in the apartment from whence he had taken the papers. He heard the monk, as he had conceived he would, enter that chamber in the night, and apparently examine every part. When he came to the closet, and had put his hand on the lock, Mortimer suddenly burst it open, and disclosed

himself to the view of the horror-struck Hildargo, who fell on the floor.

He then repaired to his chamber, disencumbered himself of the armour, and went to bed, when he soon fell asleep; from which he was awoke some time after by the monk, who was fearful of being alone.

Mortimer endeavoured by his conversation to increase the alarms of the monk, in order that he might desist from his search and leave the chateau; which succeeded entirely as he could wish: for Hildargo that evening departed from the place where he had been so greatly terrified, after having particularly desired Mortimer not to alarm the domestics with any recital of what he had imparted to him as having seen;—which the reader may well suppose Mortimer strictly attended to.

Mortimer soon after had the happiness of hearing that the Lady Emillia de Hertford, whom he had saved from the

destruction that hung over her, had been married to Sir William Gaveston, a knight every way fitted to make her happy.

The honest heart of De Veseri greatly rejoiced at this circumstance. But the absence of his beloved lord, Edmund de St. Clair, clouded his mind, and incessantly he grieved after him ; at times resolving on traversing the gloomy forest of Guirche, in order to try to obtain some intelligence of him. But this undertaking he found he was unfit for, by reason of his advanced years.

Sometimes he would at midnight descend into the vaults of the chateau, and examine if the papers and titles of the estates were safe ; while a tear would roll down his furrowed cheeks, at the little hope that he entertained of ever again being blessed with a sight of his rightful lord.

From the monk or Sir Orlando de Vortimer he never heard. He therefore

kept the revenues of the estates, which he deposited in a place of security, that should Edmund return, he might have the satisfaction of delivering them into his hands, who alone had a right to possess them.

CHAP. XLV.

EDMUND at length came within sight of the chateau de St. Clair, which brought many tears to his eyes at the recollection of his mother. Alighting at the great gate, he entered the hall, and enquired of the domestic who appeared, whether Mortimer de Veseri was in the chateau. Being answered in the affirmative, he was conducted into an apartment of the chateau, and Mortimer soon after entered.

Edmund, with his visor down, was unknown to the faithful steward, who gazed with some surprise at the sable knight; who at length raising his visor, Mortimer beheld the well-known features of his young lord.

"Is it possible!" said he. "Can I be so blessed! Do I again behold my rightful lord?" In an ecstasy of delight, he was going to kneel before him, when Edmund caught his arm. "Stop, Mortimer! that is more than I can permit," said he, in an agitated voice. "Sit down my good friend; calm your emotions," said he, seeing Mortimer unable to stand: "I have much to ask you."

"Proceed, my dearest lord," said Mortimer, "I will reply to your questions while I have breath."

"What then," said Edmund, "is become of my mother?"

Mortimer was silent. That was indeed a question, which it required his utmost philosophy to inform her son of.

Edmund perceived the pain he had given him by his question. "Tell me, then," said he, "briefly; Is she no more; or does she still exist?"

"I hope," said Mortimer; "nay, I believe she is alive."

"Indeed!" said Edmund, his countenance brightening with delight; "what reason have you to think so?"

"I cannot now," said Mortimer, "explain all I know to you; the tale is long, and I am too much agitated to relate it. The joy of seeing you once more return to your rightful inheritance, is almost too much for me."

Edmund forbore demanding any more questions at that time; for he saw Mortimer was too much agitated to answer him. He was delighted to hear that there were still hopes of his mother's existence; and for some time reflected on it with the greatest pleasure.

When Mortimer became more composed, he related all he had collected from the distracted sentences of Sir Orlando; and concluded by expressing it as his firm belief, that Hildargo was privy to the detention of the Lady Agnes, as he was absent from the castle

from the time that lady was reported to have perished by the banditti, and that he never returned to it till very lately.

" Would to Heaven," said Edmund, " that I had seen him ! he should have perished beneath my hands, or have explained the whole infernal transaction. But what hinders me ? I will this instant set forward and seek him, even though he were at the end of the world."

" Restrain your just resentment for a while," said Mortimer de Veseri, " while I beg you to accompany me." Edmund, somewhat surprised at the request of Mortimer, followed him.

De Veseri now ordered one of the domestics to bring him a lamp ; and having got it, he began to descend into the vaults, and taking a spade, dug up the earth, while Edmund stood looking at him. At length he took up a small box, which he presented to him.

" This, my lord," said Mortimer,

" contains the will of your father, and the titles to your estates, which I have preserved from Sir Orlando de Vortimer, who would else have disposed of them."

Edmund was deeply affected by the kind attentions of the faithful Mortimer, who had thus secured his property from the unprincipled Sir Orlando. After a moment's thought, " Commit the box again to its safe repository," said Edmund. " I cannot, my good Mortimer live in this chateau, till I know whether my dear mother, whose right it is, is yet living; when I trust I shall be able, through the goodness of Heaven, to revenge her wrongs, and conduct her to her residence. Then, my faithful friend," said he, " I can present her with my estates, in the room of those which Sir Orlando has so basely disposed of." Mortimer took the box, and having again covered it with the earth, they emerged from the gloomy vaults.

Mortimer now related to Edmund all the stratagems he had made use of to alarm Sir Orlando and the monk.

Edmund gazed on the portrait of his father for some time. "Ah, my lord," said Mortimer, "I recollect the Baron, your father, when he was of your age, how like he was to you; the same height, the same countenance." Here Mortimer sighed at the recollection.

"Mortimer," said Edmund, "what is the name of the castle where Sir Orlando now lives?" "It is Mantow Castle," replied De Veseri.

"And is the monk there now?" said Edmund, musing.

"It was his intention, my lord," said Mortimer, "to go there when he left this place."

"Will you accompany me to England, Mortimer," said Edmund.

"Will I, my lord!" said Mortimer,

delighted. "I shall be most happy to attend you."

"Then get yourself ready," said Edmund; "to morrow we will set out."

Mortimer, in his delight at this unexpected pleasure, and the object of his solicitude being safe, forgot his years, and with great alacrity made the necessary preparations.

He carefully concealed from the domestics in the chateau of the arrival of Edmund, who remained the whole of the day without stirring from the apartment. He was alternately agitated by hopes and fears of being able to restore his beloved mother to liberty and happiness; and he felt resolved to dare all dangers to effect the deliverance of one so dear to him.

When it was night he left the chateau, and wandered about the places so well known to him, by the light of the moon, indulging more pleasing ideas,

than he had done since the lamented absence of his mother. Mortimer in the meantime was busily employed in arranging his concerns: he took with him all the money he had collected from the estates; and when Edmund returned, he informed him that every thing was prepared; and as soon as the dawn revisited the earth, they departed from the chateau, and when they arrived at Basil, the vine-dresser's cottage, Edmund determined on resting there for the night, more out of regard for the years of Mortimer, than any fatigue that he experienced.

There they learnt the illness of the monk Hildargo, who had staid there so many months confined to his bed. Basil confirmed what Mortimer had informed Edmund of, namely, that he was going to Manstow.

As they had far to travel the next day, Edmund retired early to rest; and

Mortimer, fatigued with having been without his accustomed repose the night before, gladly laid down his weary limbs, and sought that composing deity who sheds his peaceful slumbers on the innocent.

As soon as it was light, Edmund continued his journey. He now informed the faithful Mortimer of all that had occurred to him since he left the chateau with the Lady Agnes.

Mortimer heard the interesting tale with delight. He well recollected the story of Osberne, and had seen him often.

Edmund, as they were passing through the forest of Guirche, could not forbear turning out of his road to visit the friendly knights, who were delighted to see him. Edmund staid a short time with them, and visited the tomb of Osberne, over which he dropped a tear of deep and heart-felt regret; and then pursued his journey.

In a few days he arrived at the sea-

shore; where, embarking with Mortimer in a small skiff, the sailors hoisted the sails, and in a few minutes the shores of Bretagne began to diminish to the sight.

The wind blew uncommonly violent, and the agitated waters of the deep rose high around the vessel. Edmund holding by the mast, viewed the mountainous billows, on whose summits the vessel one time rose, and at other times would sink in the briny vale.

Edmund divested himself of his cumbrous armour, that he might be ready to be of service should he be required. Meanwhile the wind shifting, drove them far out of their course, and the mariners looked pale and frightened at the storm.

The clouds hung in black lowering clusters, and the light sand rushed on, driven by the furious winds that howled among the shrouds of the bark. To add to the horrors of the storm, night came

suddenly on, and the pale lightnings played on the troubled face of the waters, and the rumbling peals of the thunder made the bark tremble.

Edmund viewed the dreadful conflict of nature with an undaunted gaze. The sight was new to him; the black waves rolling on in dreadful tumult. The white spray on the summits, the sudden glare of the lightning, as it burst from the bosom of a murky cloud, and the tremendous peals of thunder brought not fear to his breast. He trusted in that All-seeing Power, who can as easy preserve his creatures in the raging storm, as in the verdant grove.

The mariners meanwhile gave themselves up for lost. The helm refused to guide the bark through the raging ocean, and the sudden gusts of wind made it impossible to hoist a sail; all was dark around, save when the lightning shewed them the horrors of their situation.

But now a new noise, as of the dashing of waves, assailed their ears. Aghast the mariners endeavoured to look through the murky gloom. A sudden flash of light from the skies shewed before them a lofty rock, black and horrible. A cry of horror burst from every mouth, and in the next instant the vessel struck, and the waves overwhelmed it.

Edmund, in that dreadful moment, caught hold of Mortimer, who he saw would instantly fall a victim to the waves, as he was little able to assist himself on account of his years. He plunged with him into the raging billows. At that instant a tremendous wave bore them on its briny bosom far up the rock, and when it retreated, was bringing them away with it. Edmund struggled with his utmost strength, still holding Mortimer, and clinging to a craggy rock, stopped his further progress.

Another wave now forced him away, and dashing him higher up the rock, left him there. Edmund instantly rose, and exerting his yet remaining strength, assisted Mortimer to crawl up the cliff. The next wave fortunately did not remove them from their hold, and they continued their dangerous progress, till they were out of the reach of the roaring billows.

Here Edmund let go his hold of Mortimer, who was unable to speak, and seating him on a piece of rock, staid by him till the dawn should break and disclose to them their situation. While they were sitting dejected on the rock, a wave would often come and wet them, and the spray, drove by the wind, showered over them every moment.

Edmund wished to proceed farther on, but Mortimer was too weak, and clung to the rock unable to move.

The long wished-for dawn at length

beamed from the eastern horizon; and Mortimer, now able to speak, poured forth his grateful thanks to his lord, without whose generous assistance he must have perished.

" If I have saved you, my friend," said Edmund, " it is only a just requital for your faithful services. Good Heavens!" said Edmund, who was looking about him; " See, Mortimer, had we advanced a few yards further, we should both have fallen down a dreadful precipice. How grateful ought we to be to Providence, that we have escaped such a miserable death.

They now looked towards the vessel, which had been carried by the waves high up on the shelving rock, and lay on one side shattered and broke almost to pieces. The waves had now greatly subsided, and Edmund supporting Mortimer, left the rock, and with grateful thanks to Heaven for their preservation,

they found themselves on the shore of the stormy ocean.

Of the three mariners who were in the vessel, one had perished; and Edmund beheld his lifeless form lying among the rocks; the others now approached Edmund, and seemed astonished at his being preserved, for they had observed his humane conduct to Mortimer, and concluded that they must both perish.

The vessel was now lying completely out of the water, and the mariners busied themselves in bringing the stores out of the vessel farther up on the shore, for they feared that at the returning tide, the bark would go to pieces; that done, they interred their dead comrade, in the sands on the sea-shore.

Edmund now slowly walked up the beach with Mortimer, and seeing some cabins, which apparently belonged to fishermen, they entered one, and in-

quired where the storm had drove them, and had the happiness to find that they were on the English coast.

They remained some days in the cabin to rest themselves, and to have their armour cleaned, for the quilting was completely drenched by the water. Mortimer at length recovered his fatigues, and Edmund having procured two horses, and a direction to Manstow castle, they began their journey slowly, in order that Mortimer should not be too much fatigued.

When they came in that part of the country where Manstow castle was, they heard of the tournament, and Edmund and Mortimer both resolved on entering the castle, and accusing Sir Orlando de Vortimer, by touching his shield.

With this intent they muffled themselves up, and entering the hall early in the morning, Edmund hung his shield up.

As there were only one or two knights in the hall at the time, and as he wished the accusation to be more public, he deferred it till a fitter opportunity, and for that purpose, again, with Mortimer, entered the hall in the evening, when, as Mortimer was raising his hand, a sudden thought struck Edmund, and he hastily drew him away. "I will not," said he, "accuse him, as in that case I shall be deprived of meeting him in the tournament; another occasion will do for that purpose; let us now leave the hall, lest we be observed.

Mortimer was delighted at the idea of his beloved lord encountering Sir Orlando; for he entertained not the least doubt of his overthrowing and disgracing his bitter enemy. He therefore made the necessary arrangements in his mind as they were walking by the side of the lake; when finding that some of the ladies were approaching that way, they

retired to the cottage, where the night before they had taken up their abode.

Early the next morning, Mortimer having made the necessary arrangements, Edmund desired him, as soon as he had entered the lists, immediately to proceed back to the cottage, where he should prepare every thing to set off directly; for he now considered that what he had heard respecting his beloved mother, were only the ideas of others; and should it be found that he had endeavoured to criminate Sir Orlando unjustly, the stigma would rest heavy on his honour. He therefore hoped to be able to get hold of the monk, whom he determined to force to confess what had been done with the Lady Agnes; and then to demand of the king a judicial combat, which he would in that case be well entitled to.

With this idea he entered the lists; and after he had vanquished Sir Orlando

he declined receiving the prize from the Lady Anna de Vortimer, because courtesy would have obliged him to raise his visor; and in that case he would have hazarded a discovery of his person; which would have prevented the accomplishment of his plans.

Hastily leaving the castle, he rejoined the faithful Mortimer; and desiring the peasant to mislead any one who should make enquiry, and making him a handsome reward, they pursued their way from Manstow. Edmund intending, after he had been absent some time, to return again, to endeavour to put his schemes into effect; he related to the impatient Mortimer the success of the day, and how his blood boiled with rage at seeing the hateful monk seated by the side of the Lady Anna.

He remained, though unwillingly, some weeks absent, travelling the country and indulging his sorrows; when one morn-

ing, as he was journeying towards Manstow, he met the Lady Anna, and the poor old Hubert, who lay dying in the road. He accordingly, as has been related, afforded them every assistance in his power; and felt his rage against Sir Orlando increase when he heard of his conduct towards the Lady Anna, whose beauties struck on his heart; which was, however, too much engrossed by the uncertainty of his mother's fate, to dwell long on the lovely charms of Anna de Vortimer.

When he had conducted her safe to the castle de Percy, and had learnt from the robber he had wounded, of the monk Hildargo having carried away the Lady Agnes, whom the robber had, according to his instructions, represented to have been murdered by the banditti, he grew outrageous, and determined instantly on challenging Sir Orlando de Vortimer to meet him in the field.

Mortimer, who was fearful of the treachery which he well knew Sir Orlando was capable of, endeavoured to dissuade him from it. Edmund, however, would not listen to his persuasions, and proceeded with all haste to Manstow castle; where, as has been related, he dispatched Mortimer with the challenge, desiring him to couch it in such terms, that Sir Orlando might still remain in ignorance whether it was for his conduct to the Lady Agnes or the Lady Anna de Vortimer that he was thus publicly called to answer for.

The proceedings of Sir Orlando, in confining Edmund, and of that circumstance being the cause of his protecting and discovering his beloved mother, has been related. He had now ample reason to state his wrongs to the king; and when he had seen his mother safe in the convent, he repaired to the court.

The only thing he regretted as having

occurred to give him pain, was the sword of his revered father, the Baron de St. Clair, and the valuable present of the friendly hapless Osberne; it having been taken from him when he was seized by the gang which Sir Orlando de Vortimer so basely, and so unworthy of a knight, sent out to surprise him.

Mortimer had also his sword taken. But as they passed through the armoury, when they were endeavouring to find some outlet to escape at, they had both furnished themselves with swords.

Edmund, however, greatly regretted the loss of his sword, and determined, if it was possible, to get possession of it ere he engaged with Sir Orlando; and during his journey to London, where the court was then held, he was constantly ruminating how he should obtain it.

He had, however, not been able to fix on any plan; and in the midst of his consultations with Mortimer, which

were always undecisive, he arrived in London.

He was at some loss how to be introduced to the king; but at length, having related his embarrassment to an officer of state, the monarch was informed, that a knight desired to lay before him his reasons for requesting that he might be allowed to have a judicial combat with a person who had wronged him; which wrongs the knight solicited permission to lay before him. He therefore appointed a day to hear the case, and to give permission, if the circumstances should warrant it.

CHAP. XLVI.

With a firm and manly demeanour, Edmund, on the day appointed, related to the king, the conduct of Sir Orlando de Vortimer. The monarch attentively listened to his story, and expressed his disapprobation of De Vortimer's conduct. "'Tis," said he, "not long ago since we dispatched Sir William Gaveston and our seneschal, to take from Sir Orlando, the guardianship of the Lady Anna de Vortimer, agreeable to the entreaties of the Lady Gertrude de Percy, whom we hold greatly in our favour, for many services conferred to us; and we

have not as yet heard of the return of our messengers. Indeed, my mind greatly misgives me, if this base knight has not detained them in the strong holds of Manstow.

"Go then, Sir Knight, and with thee, take a party of our chosen troops; and should it so appear to thee, as I have said, attack the castle, and bring us captive, Sir Orlando."

Edmund, at this, hung his head; he had hoped, that as he had made a complaint himself, of Sir Orlando, that the king would have granted him leave to combat with the base De Vortimer; that he might have the satisfaction of meeting the man in the field, who had so greatly injured him; and of punishing him with his own hands.

The king saw the gloom which overhung the countenance of Edmund. "Knight," said he, "have you any particular request to make?" "Sire,"

said Edmund, "I had hoped that you would have permitted me to challenge Sir Orlando, and that, on pain of refusal, he would have been dishonoured."

"Thou hast my leave so to do," replied the king; "and I will give order accordingly, that my judges attend the combat; but thou wilt, for fear of treachery on the part of Sir Orlando, take with thee, the troops."

Edmund expressed his thanks to the king, for his goodness; and preparations being made, he departed with the troops of the king, and animated by a just and honourable revenge, hasted on towards the castle of Manstow, to punish the base usurper, who had so greatly wronged both himself, and the Lady Anna de Vortimer.

As soon as the news of the armament reached the ears of the Lady Emillia, she gave orders for the vassals of Sir William Gaveston, to be assembled, and

his adherents, which met Edmund's troops on the road.

The united bands marched towards the castle of Manstow, and when its lofty turrets met the eyes of Edmund, his breast swelled with indignation at beholding the pennons of Sir Orlando waving with the blast. He pitched his camp upon a gentle eminence, at some distance from the castle, and then dispatched a herald to Sir Orlando, who was charged with the orders of the king, respecting the combat.

Edmund had, as soon as he had arrived in the city of London, put aside his sable armour, now, that he had so happily restored his beloved mother to liberty, and had put on a hauberk of the finest steel. His helmet was also of steel, studded with gems, and crested with variegated plumage; on his shield, he wore the device of his family, which was two golden griffins; and over his

armour, was a rich surcoat of purple velvet, embroidered with gold.

Sir Orlando was banqueting with Sir Hugh de Burleigh, and some of their adherents, when, attended by two pages, arrived the unexpected herald; who was ushered to the grand hall, where Sir Orlando was.

At the sight of the device of the Baron de St. Clair, which was richly emblazoned on his tabard, De Vortimer turned pale; endeavouring, however, to suppress his emotions, he demanded his business.

"I am ordered to acquaint you, Sir Orlando de Vortimer, that Edmund, son of the Baron Henri de St. Clair, has represented the injurious treatment which his mother, the Lady Agnes de Vortimer, has received from you, to the king; who, therefore, has ordered that you do meet the said Edmund de St. Clair in single combat, or abide the consequences of his displeasure."

This said, the herald cast down his gauntlet.

While he was speaking, Sir Orlando recovered the perturbation he had been thrown in. Edmund de St. Clair he knew must be a very youth, and he doubted not of obtaining a complete conquest over him; and when the herald had concluded his speech, "Go," said he, "and tell that rash boy, your master, that to-morrow I will meet him on the castle lawn, where he shall receive the just punishment of his temerity."

The herald then departed, and communicated the message of Sir Orlando to Edmund de St. Clair, who was delighted at the acquiescence of Sir Orlando to his challenge, for he feared that he would not accept of it.

Attended by Mortimer and Robert de Bertrand, the friend of Sir William Gaveston, who soon after the arrival of the herald, rode across the country to

the convent, where he had left his beloved mother.

She was greatly delighted to see him, and for a long time hung on his neck; she noticed his change of armour, and rightly judged that the cause was her happy restoration to the world. She asked him many questions about Sir Orlando, which he contrived to evade, not wishing to afflict her with the knowledge of the intended engagement the next morning; and at length took an affectionate leave, promising to be with her again in a few days, when he trusted that he should be able to conduct her from her seclusion.

He now rejoined De Bertrand and Mortimer, who had waited for him in the avenue that led to the convent.

Edmund was still uneasy about his father's sword, and determined to make some attempt that night, to get possession of it.

The only way this could be effected was by entering the castle; and with this hazardous undertaking he now acquainted Robert de Bertrand and Mortimer, expressing his great distress at the loss of the sword, and adding, that he knew in what chamber his own and Mortimer's swords had been thrown.

De Bertrand immediately offered his services, and Mortimer was rejoiced at the idea.

Night had now began to unfold her sable banner from the battlements of heaven, when Edmund, with De Bertrand and Mortimer, rode through the forest which lay behind the castle of Manstow, for Edmund's only hope of entering the castle was by the postern under the western rampart.

Dismounting from their steeds, they tied them to some trees, and cautiously advanced to the castle; Edmund now heard the watch set for the night, and

presently after saw a party of soldiers wind round the walls, two of whom were stationed at the postern, which was opened, and the rest of the party went in.

Edmund began to fear that his attempt would be useless as the centinels below would instantly give the alarm to the men on the rampart above. The only thing that was in their favour was the darkness of the night; but should they be fortunate enough to effect an entrance into the castle, the uncertainty where the other party were stationed, rendered it dangerous for them to traverse the passage in the dark, as in a moment they might be surprised.

Edmund however, finding his companions resolved to follow him, advanced as close to the centinels as the trees would permit. Edmund listened to their conversation which was on the approaching combat.

" I suppose," said one " that the castle will be attacked, as I heard the warden say, a large party were encamped on the other side of the lake."

" Aye," returned the other, " we are likely to have hot work of it, but I suppose if Sir Orlando is slain, Sir Hugh de Burleigh will not defend the place. Well, I wish to my heart the Lady Anna had possession of the castle as before; we have now such hard duty."

" Aye, hard enough," replied the other. " Prythee, Constantine," said he, " do go and try to get us something to eat and drink, the night is cold, and we have four hours to watch; I will be careful of the post till you return; but for my part I see no use in our being here at all, unless it is to keep the deer from the place."

" But," said Constantine, " suppose Sir Orlando or Sir Hugh de Burleigh were to come this way."

"Pooh!" said the other, "As I was crossing the court, I peeped into the grand hall, and they all were drinking and making merry; and between you and I," continued the man, in a lower voice, "I believe they were all drunk, they kept such a roaring, so there is no fear of them."

"Well, mind, Barnard that you keep a good look out."

"Never fear, Constantine." replied the other, "I knew my duty you young dog before you were born."

Constantine now leaving his pike against the wall on one side the postern, went into the passage.

Edmund now saw that the only opportunity of effecting an entrance was this moment, as they might seize on the man who was called Constantine, whom they would force to tell whether there was any guard in the passage. And Edmund recollecting that he was

a well-wisher to the Lady Anna, hoped to bring him to assist them.

He communicated his intentions to his companions, who, creeping round the wall as the centinel's back was turned, suddenly seized on him, and having gagged him to prevent his making an alarm, they tied him to a tree at some distance from the castle, and then hastened into the passage.

Edmund and Mortimer who had passed it before, went first, and Bertrand followed. They had not gone far when they heard the steps of Constantine; he stopped and called out, "Is that you, Barnard? Why did you leave the postern?" At this moment Edmund ran up against him, and seizing him in his strong hold, told him that instant death awaited him if he made the least noise, and that he was in the hands of the Lady Anna's friends.

"Assure me of that," said Constantine.

"I will," said Edmund. "It is the sable knight who now holds you."

"The sable knight!" said the man, much alarmed; "And how did you get into the castle? Where is Barnard?" "We have secured him," said Edmund; "he is safe enough. My present purpose is, to enter the chamber in the southern turret, where my sword is, which was taken from me, when I was seized and put into the dungeons of the castle."

"And should I assist you," said the man; "will you take me with you, for I am weary of Sir Orlando's service?"

Edmund promised him he would.

"Then, Sir Knight," said Constantine, "depend on my fidelity; it was me who procured the means of the Lady Anna's escape from the castle." He then related how he had done it. Edmund greatly delighted at his success in meeting the very man who was so

well inclined to assist him, promised to reward him handsomely if he should succeed, and to take him in his own service.

They now began to ascend the stairs, when Edmund demanded where the party went, whom he saw enter the portal.

" They are gone to the castle guard chamber," replied Constantine, " which is on one side of the gateway."

When they entered the armoury, Constantine felt for a sword, and having got one, he passed through it to the passage which led to the chapel. " Sir Knight," said he, " I trust your design in entering the castle, proceeds no farther than the wish of regaining your sword; I would sooner die than let Sir Orlando, much as I dislike him, perish through any treachery of mine."

Assured by this, of Constantine's good intentions, Edmund set his mind

at rest on that head; he now advanced from the chapel into the passage that led to the castle gate; and as he cautiously opened the door at the end, saw at some distance, a centinel pacing in the gloomy space before him.

As the guard-chamber was not far off, any attempt to surprise the man must be heard, and they would instantly be discovered.

Edmund silently closed the door, and demanded of Constantine what was to be done. He, however, was unable to inform him; till, looking at the centinel, he turned back to Edmund, seemingly greatly pleased, and said, "That man is my intimate friend, and if you will permit me to leave you, I think I can manage to send him away."

Edmund hesitated, and Bertrand touched his arm. What Constantine had said and promised, might be only to deceive them; and if he went, he might

instantly alarm the guard, and they could not hope to escape from the castle in the night, as there would be so much difficulty in retracing their steps. And yet, if Constantine was not suffered, he saw he must return without getting the sword.

Constantine judged from the silence of Edmund, what was passing in the knight's breast, and in a low voice, conjured him, not to have so ill an opinion of him, as to doubt his fidelity. Edmund, at length, consented; and drawing his sword, awaited the event.

Constantine now opened the door, and was instantly challenged by the centinal, whom he answered, and went up to him, and entered into conversation with him, in a low voice.

The party were much agitated, and watched the figures of the two men as they were walking to and fro. The centinal, at last, gave his pike to Constan-

tine, and crossed the court-yard, in the direction of the grand hall.

Edmund, now concluded that he had sent him to inform Sir Orlando of his foe being in his castle, and began to think of returning, but Constantine hastily approached the door; "All is well," said he, in a low voice; "under the pretence of my being fearful of leaving the passage that led to my post, I have taken his duty, while he is gone to get something for my comrade Barnard and myself; you may now safely come forth."

Edmund and his companions now left the passage, and by the direction of Constantine found out the south turret. A door in it was open, and a light appeared within the chamber. Sounds of mirth proceeded from it.

Edmund slowly advanced to the door, and looking in, saw the warden of the castle and some of the inferior officers

sitting round a large table, drinking. The room was not that in which his sword was left, and he cautiously quitted the door.

Another now met his view. It was closed. Bertrand and Mortimer drew back the bolts, and entered into the dark recess. "The Saints defend me! who is there?" said a female voice. "What can your intent be at this time of night?"

"Whoever you are," said Edmund, "your life depends on your silence." Awed by this, the person replied not; but her agitation was evident by the quickness of her breathing.

"We mean not to harm you," said Edmund, "Tell me, is there a sword in this chamber? It is that we want."

"No," replied the female, in a tremulous voice: "this is a place where I have been confined ever since the Lady Anna escaped."

" Do not be alarmed," said Edmund. " Tell me, is there another chamber in the turret, besides that which is the warden's ?"

" Yes," said the woman, more composed ; " close to this, on the left."

Bertrand now staid with the woman, while Edmund, following her directions, found a door, which he opened. All was dark within. Mortimer felt all round the walls, in the hopes of finding the swords ; but in vain : when as he was near the door, his foot struck against something, and to his great delight he picked up two swords. Not doubting but they must be those they sought, he acquainted Edmund with his success, and leaving the chamber, they went to that where the woman was, to tell Bertrand of their good fortune.

Bertrand, who had been enquiring of the woman who she was, learnt that she was the superintendant of the Lady

Anna's domestics; and Edmund hearing this, demanded if she would accept her liberty at his hands.

"Alack," said the ancient Editha, (for her it was, whom the reader will recollect, Sir Orlando ordered into confinement,) "how am I to know to whom I entrust myself?"

"I was called the sable knight," said Edmund; "it is like you may recollect my name."

"I do, Sir Knight," said Editha; "and will you promise me, on your faith, that you will send me to my dear lady?"

Edmund promised; and hastily taking her arm, bid her be silent, or they would be discovered. They now approached Constantine, who desired them to make haste and enter the passage, as he expected the centinel's return every moment.

When they had got into the passage,

Edmund desired Mortimer to proceed directly with Editha, that she might impede them as little as possible, while he and Bertrand waited for Constantine.

Some paces were now distinguished in the court yard, and Edmund heard the voice of the centinel. Constantine wished him a pleasant watch, and rejoined Edmund; who now gladly found he had not been deceived in the trust he reposed in him.

They proceeded as fast as they were able along the dark passage; and when they entered the chapel, Edmund thought of Sir William Gaveston; and demanding of Constantine if he knew any thing of him or the seneschal the king sent down to Sir Orlando, was informed he was confined in the castle.

A wish to endeavour to release them now arose in his breast; and he asked Constantine if he thought it would be

possible. The man, however, seemed to think that it could not be done, as they were confined in the turret-chambers of the barbacan; and that he was fearful that it was almost time the watch should be relieved, and they would be certainly discovered; he was therefore obliged to give up the idea.

When they entered the armoury, Edmund laid aside the sword he had formerly taken from thence.

Mortimer had already done the same. He was now descending the steps that led to the postern, with Editha, who exerted herself to the utmost. They were some time in climbing over the rubbish in the passage.

Edmund and Bertrand, however, hastily pressed forwards; and when they had passed the postern, proceeded to the place where they had left Barnard, whom they released from the gag.

Constantine now asked him if he

would leave the castle and come with him; to which Barnard, after some hesitation, consented, well knowing that he should suffer the severest punishment from Sir Orlando, if he remained at Manstow.

Bertrand went to bring up the horses; and when Editha, much fatigued with her journey through the dark passages, at length emerged from the postern, Mortimer assisted her to ascend his horse. Constantine following, with Barnard, Edmund, and Bertrand, vaulted on their steeds, delighted with the success of their daring enterprize, and proceeded as swiftly as they were able through the wood; which they had just cleared as the long-sounding hour of midnight was proclaimed by the castle clock.

Edmund depicted to himself the confusion that would ensue in the castle on relieving the watch, as their proceedings

would then be discovered; and amused himself in thinking how greatly enraged Sir Orlando would be when he heard of it.

The party now wound over the hills which separated them from the camp, which at length they reached in safety.

Editha was placed in a vacant tent, greatly fatigued with her exertions; and Edmund hasted to his own, that he might feast his eyes with the sight of the sword which he had so long regretted, and which at last he had obtained by such a daring and almost rash enterprize, that few besides Edmund would have attempted. But he was in every respect a stranger to fear.

END OF THE FOURTH VOLUME.

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